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September 1987

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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

THOUGHT POLICE

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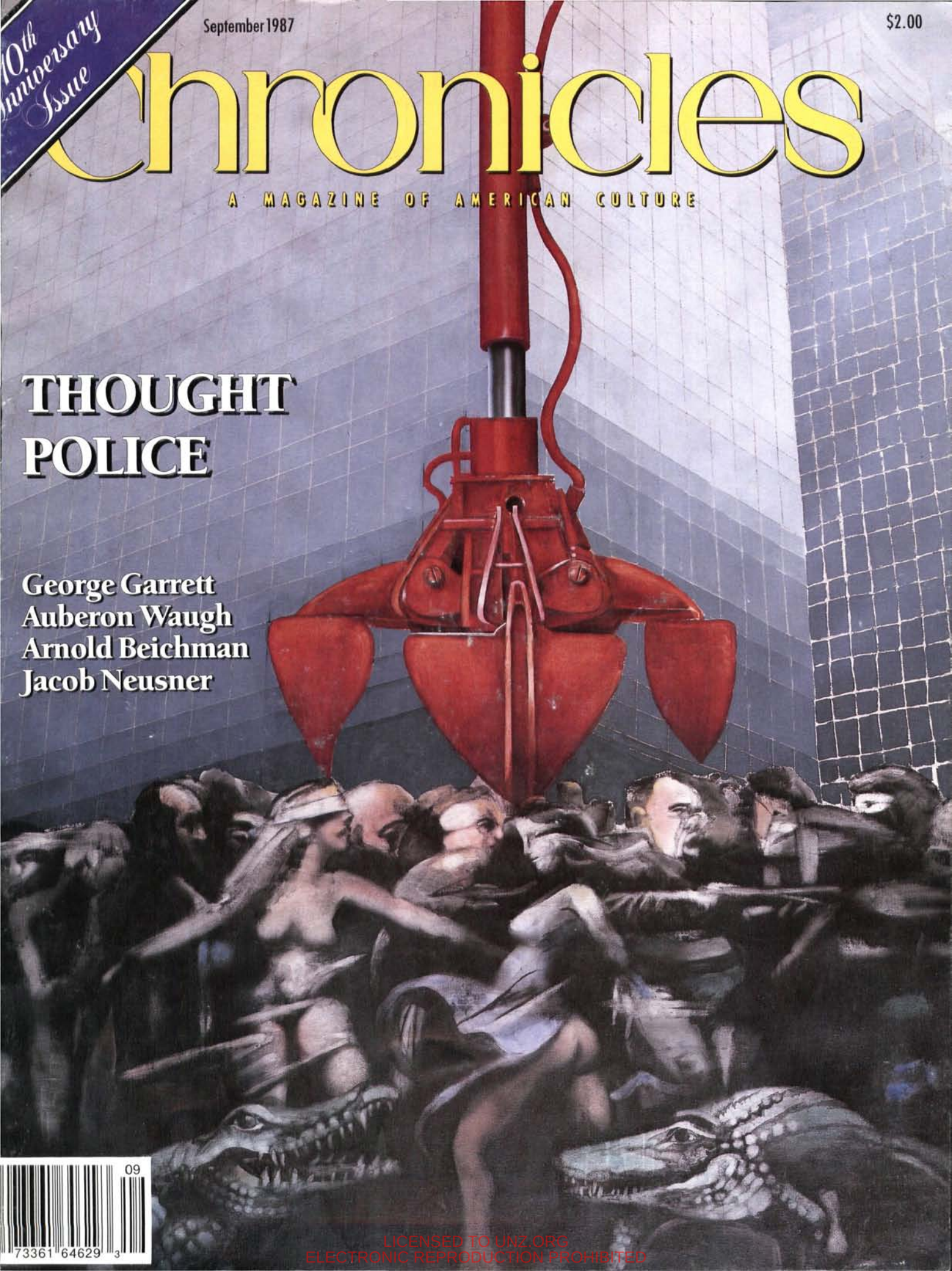

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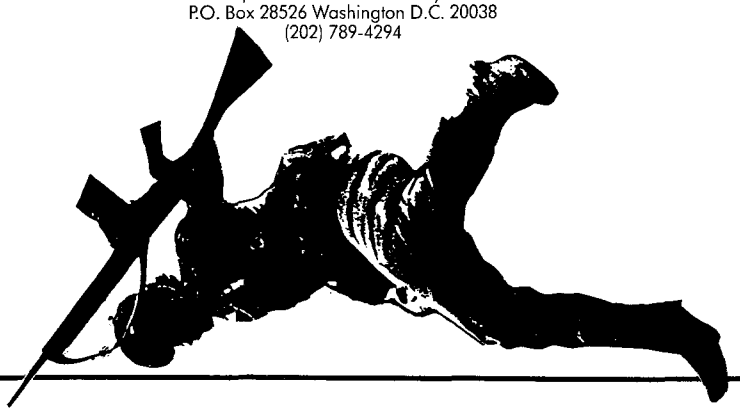

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A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
Vol. 11, No. 9, September 1987

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A Publication of
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CHRONICLES (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $21 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *CHRONICLES*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

Editorial and Advertising Offices: 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103. Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054. Advertising Phone: (815) 964-5811. Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.
U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.
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The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the author's(s') alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors.

On the Cover

Illustration on the cover and throughout the text by Zbigniew & Emilia Fitz.

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It's hip to be square—Huey Lewis' new gospel—may have been announced prematurely. George Michael has a different message: "I can't think of a better question for a 13- or 14-year-old child to be asking than 'What does monogamy mean?'" Michael is a part-time child psychologist better known as a pop singer who was once the bigger half of a duo collectively known as Wham! (Exclamation point its.) Michael's assets can be summed up by saying he is a white Michael Jackson who appeals mainly to 13- to 14-year-old girls.

Michael's statement was used as a prologue to MTV's "world premier" of the video for his "hit" song from *Beverly Hills Cop II*, "I Want Your Sex." As MTV took pains to note in the mini-documentary that preceded the video, "Even MTV asked George to edit it." Since they chose to run the video, their real sentiments must be close to the New York disc jockey who justified playing the single: "We play it because it is a hit. I'm not here to pass judgment on the content of a record." Michael prefaces the video with a bit of personal philosophy: "In the past there were arguments for and against casual sex. Those arguments were based on morality. Now it's a matter of life and death. This is not a song about casual sex."

"Casual sex" is the newest equivalent of "recreational drugs," a substitute for moral judgment. If morality is irrelevant, monogamy is equally meaningless. The word appears only once in the video which isn't, as Michael claims, about casual sex, at least not in the sense of accidental or unplanned. It's hot, calculated sex. There are two characters. A woman and Michael. The woman is gorgeous in a trashy sort of way. And she hasn't seen 13 for quite some time. She cavorts about (a) under satin sheets and (b) in nightwear that does little to conceal her rolling backside. Michael bounces around with an ankh in his ear.

About three-quarters of the way through the video, the camera pans down the woman's body. Michael scrawls "EXPLORE" on her thigh with red lipstick. Quick cut to her bare back, where he writes "MONOGAMY." The message lasts only as long as it takes him to write it.

It could be noted that the word "explore" is far from being an injunction and that it is tentative at best. But consider the audio supporting the soft-porn video. In addition to Michael's repeated, heavy-breathed declaration "I want your sex," he sings at one point, "Not everybody does it, but everybody should." Morality may be dead, but there are still Commandments. The final lines are "Have sex with me! Come on!" Nothing casual about that.

Some partisan of freedom of rock lyrics could point out that most all rock songs are essentially about *it* and that Michael is only more candid. But even if we don't expect rock songs to promote chastity, they are not required to sell promiscuity to preteens—which is exactly what "I Want Your Sex" does. And George Michael is not alone. A few minutes before the premier of his video, that day's no. 2 most-requested MTV video was shown: "Girls, Girls, Girls" by Mötley Crüe—a video shot in a utopian bordello filled with attractive women and incredibly ugly men (the boys in the band). And it's not just the male performers who exploit the sexuality of women. Fleetwood Mac, which has a fair balance between men and women, is trying to make a comeback. Its first release is "Big Love," which uses a woman's heated panting as part of the back beat, and she's not excited about the song. The band Heart, fronted by women, has had a tremendous resurgence. The steep rate of its rise has an inverse relation to the depth of Ann Wilson's cleavage. In "Walk Like an Egyptian" the all-woman group The Bangles wear the kind of outfits that used to be seen only once a year on the "adult" midway at the county fair. And we shouldn't forget Madonna, who has built a career by peddling herself. Most notable is her recent "Open Your Heart" video, in which she portrays a dancer in a peep show pandering to the tastes of a twisted clientele—as well as to a very young boy with whom she dances off into the distance.

The real bottom line is that AIDS may turn out to be an equal opportunity killer: 13 or 30, black or white, male or female, gay or straight, hip or square. When their audience (and colleagues) start dying off, George Michael, Prince, and Madonna will probably get together to perform "That's What Friends Are For." It's good publicity.

—*Gary S. Vasilash*

America's fertility rates plunged in the early 1970's, falling well below the minimal Zero Population Growth (ZPG) of 2.1 children per American woman. Never before has this happened to the nation while enjoying peace and relative prosperity. But a decisive rebound in the birthrate does not seem likely in the near future, given the widespread use of contraceptives, the legalization of abortion, the movement of unprecedented numbers of women into the workplace, and the distressingly high divorce rate. Ironically, while the nation's maternity wards sit nearly empty, millions flock to hear Bruce Springsteen sing "Born in the U.S.A." American birth has become a nostalgic rock fantasy.

Meanwhile, in Mexico—our trading partner to the South—completed

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fertility now stands at four births per Mexican woman, according to the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, DC. Even higher fertility rates are found in some other Latin American countries, producing a bountiful supply of immigrants to export to the United States.

America has generally welcomed new immigrants, but a naturally growing and youthful population can assimilate an influx of newcomers far better than a nation of childless geriatrics. Numerous observers believe that Western Europe's failing birthrates are the primary reason that those countries have in recent years virtually closed their doors to immigrants. Ethnic animosity toward foreign "guest workers" has become an explosive political issue in France, while Switzerland is actively deporting its resident aliens.

Intensified distrust of foreign immigrants counts as only one of the unpleasant side effects of a depressed birthrate. One in five Americans is now born in poverty, not because the poor have so many children, but because the wealthy and middle classes bear so few. Businessmen also feel the pinch when the middle class stops having babies. Writing in *Advertising Age* recently, Peter Francese warned that unless the baby boomers get busy having children, the economy will suffer recessionary consequences. The eroding base of youthful taxpayers also disquiets Social Security and Medicare officials. Phillip Longman of Americans for Generational Equity now predicts that given current fertility trends, "Medicare won't be able to meet the needs of today's middle-aged Americans and their children," and concludes: "The trade off between health care for the young and the old will become increasingly stark and unavoidable."

Perhaps the only winners in the baby bust are teenagers looking for part-time jobs. Fast-food chains in New England are now paying as much as $6 an hour to woo the declining number of teens to work. Some Atlanta restaurants now offer $8 an hour to attract busboys. But if America's birth dearth eventually creates a depressed economy and a war between immigrant and native, between the elderly and the young, then today's teenagers will eventually pay a high price for their solid gold McNugget paychecks.

—*Bryce Christensen*

Freedom House is a distinguished New York organization best known for its activities in monitoring human rights all over the world. However, it is also willing to go further in exploring the dimensions of freedom. After organizing a symposium on the USSR this spring, at which a representative team of Soviet dissidents discussed ways to make Gorbachev's *glasnost* something more than an advertising slogan, Freedom House decided to do the same for the limbo of Europe—Yugoslavia. In June, Freedom House Executive Director Leonard Sussman convened a panel of experts that included Mihajlo Mihajlov, Yugoslav dissident Vladimir Mijanovic, economist Ljubo Sirc, and *Chronicles*' managing editor.

Communist, "nonaligned," "self-managing" Yugoslavia, still regarded by the State Department as conducive to U.S. interests in the area, has been in the throes of a self-inflicted crisis since 1945. While Marshal Tito lived, his bluster was usually enough to suppress any truth about it abroad. But Tito, Gorbachev's predecessor in *glasnost*, died, and while Yugoslav "openness" is still as strong as it was 30 years ago, few signs of political democratization have been seen to date.

This may come as news to Elliot Abrams and other State Department luminaries, but no amount of "destabilizing" or friendly overture will make a Communist regime cry uncle. There is only one answer to President Johnson's exasperated question, "What does Ho Chi Minh really want?" Yugoslav, Soviet, Vietnamese, and Nicaraguan Communists all want the same thing: the overthrow of "capitalism" and the institution of Communist power over as much of this globe as possible.

The Freedom House symposium on Yugoslavia did privately what no American administration was willing to do yet: It gave moral support to democratic dissidents in Yugoslavia in their quest to help their country become a true European entity and a friend of the West.

"Because of their own racism, whites consider most black men threatening,"

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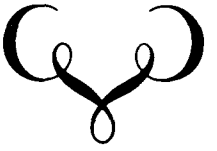

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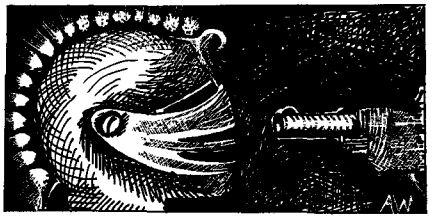

said Wilhelm Joseph, president of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, apropos the latest jury acquittal of Bernhard Goetz.

"What we are being told by this verdict is that the society cannot guarantee and assure people of African descent life or liberty—and certainly we are frustrated at every level in our pursuit of happiness," said C. Vernon Mason, black lawyer for Darrell Cabey, the subway assailant who was paralyzed by Bernhard Goetz's fifth shot.

Mr. Mason's charges have a familiar ring to them. Soviet officials, when pressed on their record of rights abuses, typically respond that the American record with its own citizens of "African descent" is much worse than anything the USSR can be accused of.

But, according to *Newsweek*, in 1986 a grand jury acquitted a black man who killed a "white punk" who had threatened subway passengers with his fists. This unpublicized case seems to have been overlooked. In 1986, no one came on record saying, like Democratic Representative Major Owens of Brooklyn, "the hysteria in the white community will be, 'Yeah, we were right, let's go get them.'"

How many black Americans share the outrage of their "spokesmen"? Eugene Mitchell, who actually lives in the neighborhood of Goetz's four young assailants, said, "I think if I had a gun in that situation, I would have done the same thing." Goetz case juror Eileen Dudley, a black secretary, is also quite definite. "I can understand what Goetz did," she said, "I was held up once. You would do anything in that situation."

"In this country we no longer employ firing squads," said David N. Dinkins, black president of Manhattan Borough. Even if guilty of robbery, he went on, the four youths who assaulted Goetz "would not have been shot for it in our system of justice." But who was talking of robbery? In his taped confession, Bernhard Goetz was adamant on that point: The $5 he was asked to turn over meant little or nothing. What Goetz was concerned about, and what he made very clear in all his testimonies, was his desire to avoid humiliation. But in Mr. Dinkins' book, and to most other participants in the debate over the Goetz case, humiliation—loss of pride and honor—seems to carry no weight. In our new age, only crimes against the flesh matter, while the spirit, being indestructible, will take care of itself.

There is an immense chasm between those who purport to speak for the American people and the people themselves. Three New York juries, made up of blacks, whites, Chicanos, *et al.*, were firmly convinced of Bernhard Goetz's innocence. What they seem to be saying—and what the powers that be are unwilling to hear—is that man has a right to protect himself, employing the best means at his disposal. Once this right is relinquished, the members of the juries imply, nothing we may ostensibly gain will equal that loss.

The maggots are still marching through the classics. Some time back we took it upon ourselves to defend the classics profession from the *Washington Times*, which accused the American Philological Association of insulting the Secretary of Education for political motives. A more recent case of academic Stalinism in classics casts doubt upon our defense. Three years ago the book review editor of an academic quarterly, *Classical Journal*, asked me to do a review article on the state of feminist scholarship in the classics. I was, at that time, teaching a summer course at Colorado and researching a book of political theory that relied heavily on anthropology, sociology, and social history. Since I was plowing through heaps of feminist scholarship in other disciplines, it seemed natural to apply this hard-won erudition to what had been my own discipline. I accepted, read a dozen books I would ordinarily have avoided (as well as two or three worth the effort), and wrote the piece, which finally came out at the end of 1986.

I argued, basically, that feminist social history, while distorted, was often invaluable in exploring the uncharted territory of women in antiquity, but that feminist literary criticism was simply propaganda. I suspected that this article would generate a certain amount of controversy, but I was not prepared for the storm that broke.

Letters to the editor were concocted, expressing outrage. The best came from an allegedly male professor at Miami of Ohio who wondered why "progressive" books were not assigned to progressive reviewers. A senior professor in Chicago could make no substantial criticism but was indignant that such an article was published by someone who had made no contribution to the field. But the biggest movement came at the directors' meeting of the American Philological Association, when the Committee on the Status of Women and Minorities made a formal complaint and asked for a resolution censoring *Classical Journal*.

Unfortunately, a majority of the directors are not fools, and, also unfortunately, *CJ* is not owned by the APA but by the Classical Association of the Midwest and South. As a result, the president of the APA sent a polite letter to the President of CAMWS saying, in essence, the ladies were upset.

The satisfaction of their wounded vanity had to await the next CAMWS meeting in April, at which it took only a few minutes to read and pass a resolution ousting the reviews editor —a distinguished male scholar—and replacing him with an unknown female. The former editor was, of course, E. Christian Kopff, the contributing editor to *Chronicles* whose national humanities council appointment was torpedoed by a remarkably similar coalition of long-haired men and short-haired women (to borrow a phrase from Henry James).

Of course, not every classicist is crazed. Two distinguished women scholars wrote in to praise the article, and mutterings are apparently heard —even from leftists—that the maenads have gone too far this time. But nothing will be done. The feminists, homosexuals, and creeps own the universities now, and taxpaying parents who send Johnny and Suzie off to State should realize into just whose hands they are entrusting their children and count their blessings if their precious darlings are seduced by a professor of the *opposite* sex. (TF)

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Is the family in America an outdated relic of the past?

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Ten Years of American *Chronicles* *(September 1977 - September 1987)*

If Rockford, Illinois, was an unlikely place to launch a serious magazine of literature and the arts, it was so much better for Leopold Tyrmand, a man who appreciated life's ironies. Having once escaped from Warsaw's Communist rule, Tyrmand had more recently fled from an oppressive New York literary scene. Now, he was to make Middle America the home for his assault on a decadent liberal culture.

At a time when conservative magazines were building their circulations around the political comedies staged by the Carter administration, Tyrmand's new magazine was to have a different focus. Partisan politics and economics were only symptoms of a larger battle over the control of American culture. A reader of *Chronicles of Culture* would clearly see "how a book, its meaning and success, affects his life, his economic activities and his sense of social order which is indispensable to carry out these activities."

Founding Editor, Leopold Tyrmand.

Chronicles' scope has greatly enlarged since its first issues, but the *raison d'être* remains. There have been no truces in the war of ideas. And in an era when new buzzwords like "cultural conservatism" easily roll off the lips of political operatives, *Chronicles*' long-standing dedication to serious discourse is needed more than ever.

Two years ago, Thomas Fleming took the reins of the magazine and never looked back. Under his editorial leadership, *Chronicles* has entertained thousands of readers who have thirsted for rigorous thinking *and* clear writing. As publisher I am pleased but humbled that during this time, *Chronicles*' influence has grown even faster than its circulation.

Over the last 10 years, many others have helped shape, manage, and market the magazine. Some are currently on the masthead. Some were only with the magazine briefly. Almost all had at one time been seduced by Tyrmand's vision for the magazine, its promise and possibilities.

Without Nancy Mohrbacher, the first two years of *Chronicles* would have been far less accurate and grammatical, and we shall not forget Rebecca Woosley, whose editorial and organizational skills made her invaluable. Or the ever-sunny Lindy Ellingwood, who did just about everything at one time or another. Most recently, Theresa Lillibridge said good-bye after helping to introduce the tools of modern management and technology into our publishing office.

Chronicles' former alumni of associate editors began with James J. Thompson Jr., a brilliant historian who possessed the courtesy and high sense of honor we used to expect from Southerners. Many of our readers will remember the hardworking professionalism of Gary Vasilash, who smoothed our transition from a bimonthly to a monthly. (Gary never really left: He is still writing for us as a contributing editor.) Bryce Christensen, whose writing and editing recently earned him the editorship of The Rockford Institute's newsletter *The Family in America* also continues to make his presence felt. Finally, the magazine is already beginning to show the thumbprint of its newest managing editor, Momcilo Selic. The current staff is the strongest team we've ever had, and we should not neglect to mention the superb covers designed by Anna Wodecki and the patient hard work of Cynthia Calvert and Leann Manning.

Chronicles would not have been possible at all if it were not for John Howard. As president of The Rockford Institute during its first decade, Dr. Howard found the financial support needed to sustain the magazine's publication. His devotion to Leopold Tyrmand and his dreams for *Chronicles* were another testament to his noble character.

I've admired those I've had the pleasure to work with over these first 10 years—especially the editors of this magazine. They possess that rare ability to make sense out of the complex realities of modern life. Frankly, I've always thought that the editors at *Chronicles* have been able to use that ability a little bit better than anybody else.

I can happily report to our readers that I expect this to be true for the next 10 years as well.

—*Richard A. Vaughan*

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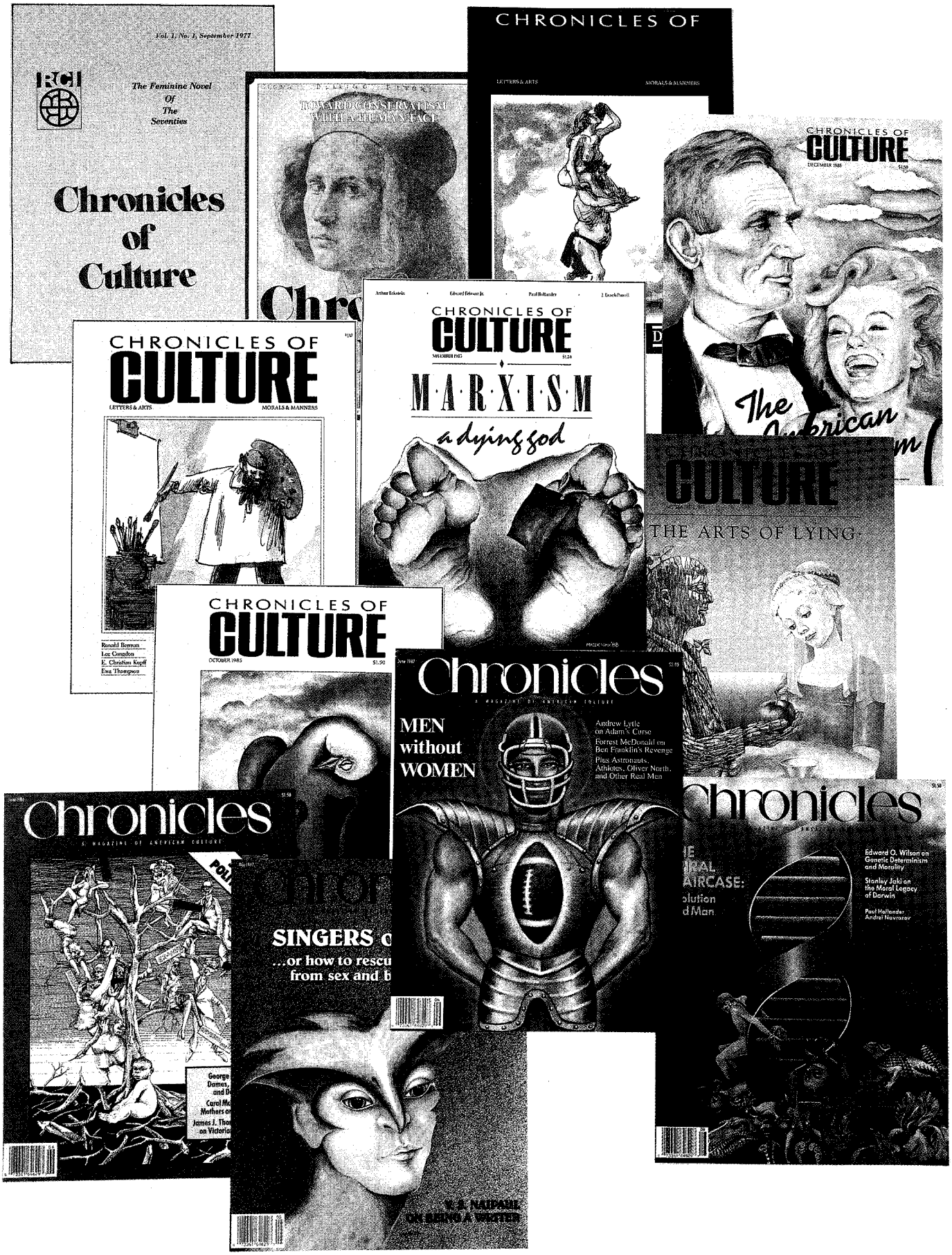

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The Illuminators

Armed with steel pen instead of sword, our first illustrator, Warren Chappell, served *Chronicles* like a knight. Elves, charging horsemen, centaurs rampant came forth under his hand to spread beyond the hundreds of his books, into a world of cultural polemic. Chappell did not fade away—resplendent in the blaze of his joyous covers he still follows us, writing praise or admonition as he sees fit.

Our first art director, Barbara De Witz, redesigned the magazine in 1985 to give it its present look, while at the same time providing illustrations. When Emilia and Zbigniew Fitz became regular illustrators, the visual frame was set.

In her professional biography, Emilia Fitz, born in 1943 in what is now the USSR, and living and working in France, wrote *Americaine*. Her husband, Zbigniew Fitz, also formerly of Poland, wrote the same. Loving may not be incompatible with leaving—the chagrin of Poles, who sing, "There will always be a Poland, as long as there are Poles," has enriched the U.S., and *Chronicles*, immensely. Draped men, shuffling before unbearable light; humanoids climbing the convoluted DNH spiral; weeping figures mourning a threatened America—these Eastern European interpretations constitute a cri du coeur.

The Fitzes will be with us for a long time—if nothing else, their whimsical vignettes may keep the Devil puzzled, long enough for us to take his measure.

(continued on page 14)

Illustrations by Warren Chappell

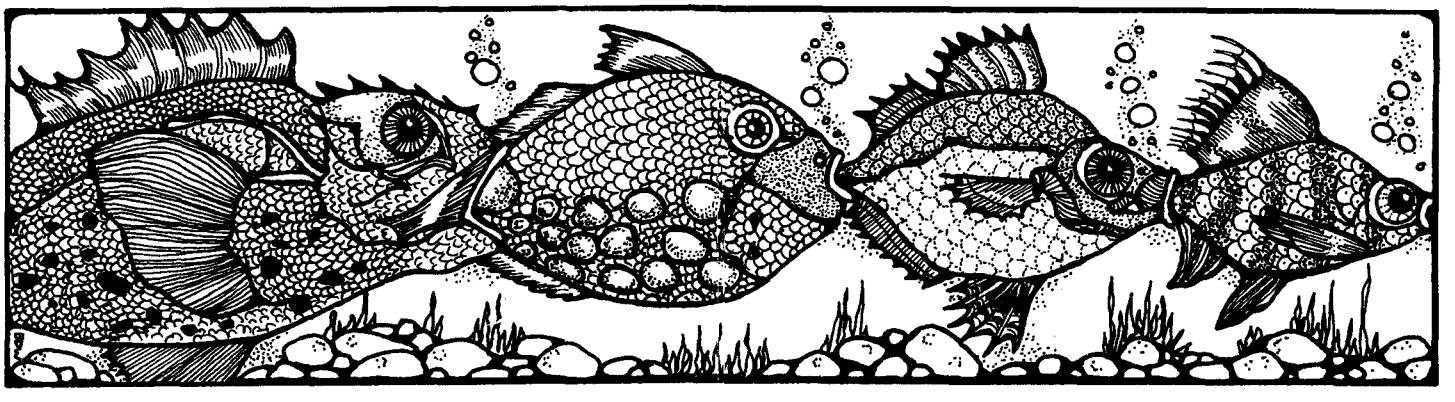

Illustration by Barbara De Witz

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Illustration by Warren Chappell

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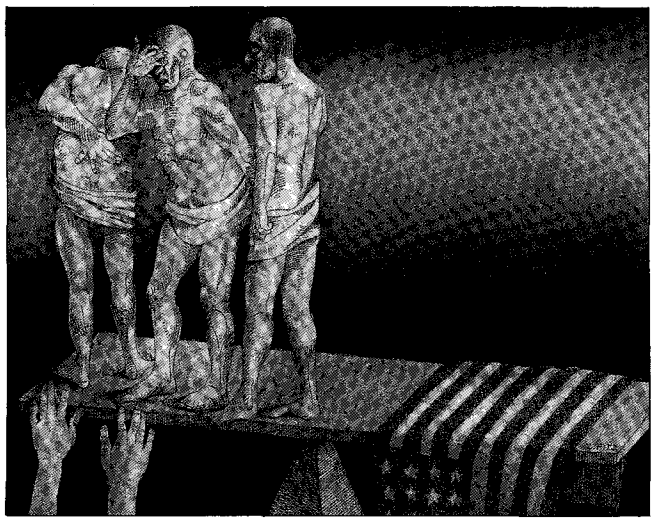
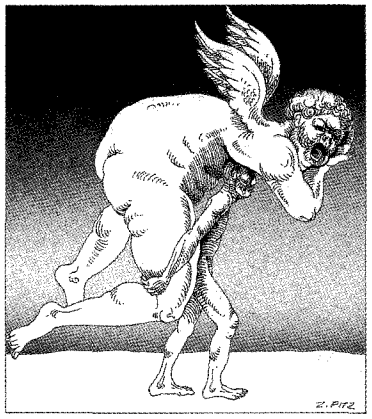
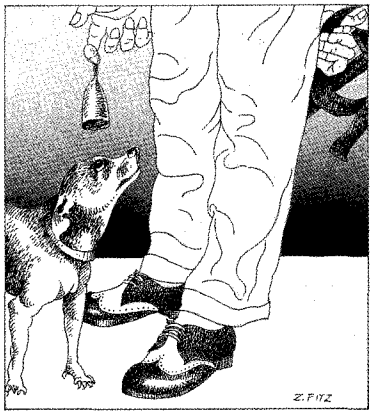
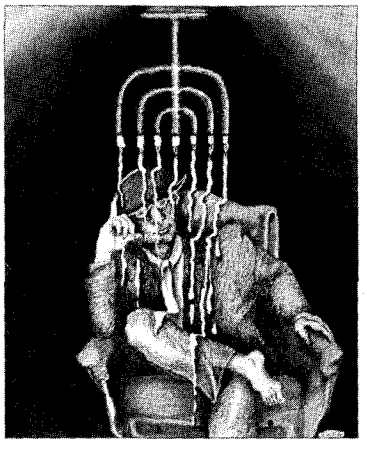


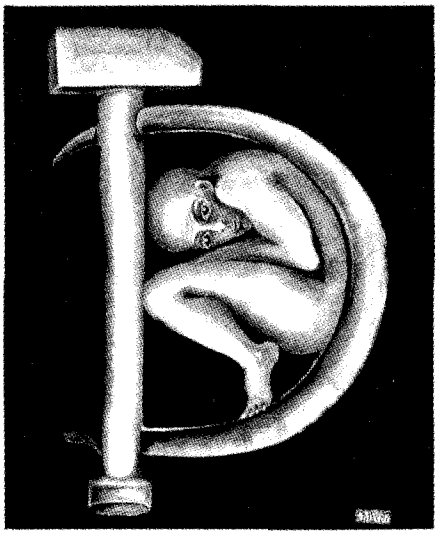




Our latest ally, Anna Wodecki, has turned out to be among our best recruiters—her plumed men and enigmatic women have hooked more readers on *Chronicles* than some of our wiliest advertising. *Chronicles,* Anna knows, being another exile from Communism, must be its own best herald; and like good gardeners, we hope to provide delight as well as nourishment. (MS)

Illustrations by Zbigniew & Emilia Fitz





Illustrations by Anna Mycek-Wodecki

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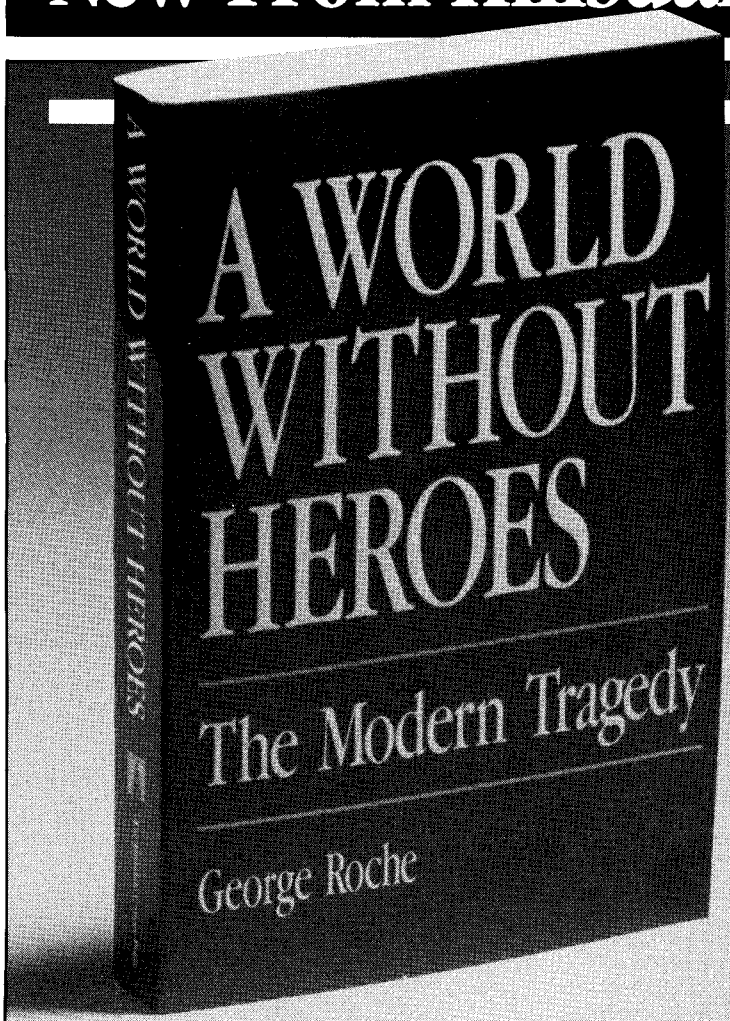

A World Without Heroes

The Modern Tragedy

By George Roche

Foreword By Russell Kirk

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A (PARDON THE EXPRESSION) BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS *by George Garrett*

The irrepressible John Towne tells us what he really thinks of higher education. Something to offend nearly everyone.

I want you to know I share your disappointment that nobody you really care about and wanted could be here to make this speech. Sorry that Gary Hart is indisposed. Alan Alda was too busy and so was Gloria Steinem. As for all the others, I am almost as sorry as you are that you couldn't get Klaus von Bulow or Jean Harris, Jody Foster or Brooke Shields, Mother Teresa or Maya Angelou, the Refrigerator or James Baldwin, Gordon Liddy or Gordon Lish, Fawn Hall or Donna Rice. I am especially sad you couldn't get yourselves a Norman—Norman Mailer or Norman Podhoretz or Norman Lear, singly or as a kazoo trio. Believe it or not, there just aren't enough famous people out there to be everywhere these days. Same old faces in *People* and W. . . .

Whoever came up with the idea of inviting a *fictional* character is either an inspired genius or a Woody Allen copycat. Anyway, here I am and I'm glad to be here, free for a while from the printed pages of a minor novel. I am not Joe Bob Briggs. Joe Bob is out on assignment. And some of you may already have guessed, on account of my preppy, slightly down-at-the-heels WASP appearance (actually, appearance-wise, if you'll pardon the expression, I am a dead ringer for the brilliant young novelist Madison Smartt Bell) that I am not Nathan Zuckerman. Sorry about that. The odd thing about Nathan is, all things considered and not excluding the success of the books *he* gets to live in, that he and his author get along pretty well. You can't even invite one without the other, and you can't afford either of them, anyway.

My name is Towne, John Towne, and I don't get along at all with my author. We aren't speaking to each other, not since he exposed me to outrage and ridicule in a novel called *Poison Pen*. Boy-oh-boy, the critics! Here's how they described me to potential readers (if any): *Publishers Weekly*—"a vulgar scapegrace"; *New York Times Book Review*—"a low-life crank"; *National Review*—"a coke-befuddled redneck"; *Book World*—"a full-time con artist, misanthrope, and lecher"; *Chicago Tribune*—"a lecherous, misanthropic, failed academic"; *Village Voice*—"an exceptionally sleazy picaro"; and, best of all, Fred Chappell's description of me in the *Greensboro News*, "a loathsome, racist, crude and gruesome creep." Enough stuff like that could eventually hurt a guy's feelings, you know? Anyway, I'm pleased to be here with you instead of back in that book hiding from critics. Thanks for thinking of me.

First thing, I want to congratulate all of you who have managed to win prizes and awards. I hope you enjoy them to the fullest, if only because irrefutable statistics prove most of you will never win another blessed thing as long as you live. For most of you, this is it. The rest of you, the huge majority who didn't win anything, aren't going to change your luck out there. And no amount of weeping and wailing, praying and fasting, goals, guidelines, and Affirmative Action is going to change the odds against you very much. Relax. We are all mostly destined to be losers

George Garrett is a novelist and poet whose most recent books include Poison Pen *and* The Succession.

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together. *I lose; you lose; he, she, it loses.* Call it a conjugation for clowns, syntax for suckers. Then try to think positively about it. Chances are you will always have next to nothing to lose. No Book of Job for you. When Death comes knock, knock, knockin', early or late, you'll be about half glad to unlock, unbolt, and open the door. And if the Idiots start trading off missiles and nukes, well you don't have to worry about all your trophies and medals melting down. There are advantages to being a nonentity, a nobody, as Emily Dickinson pointed out a couple of times.

Of course, the great anxiety is that you can never be perfectly sure that you won't be recognized, sooner or later, and spoil your record. My (pardon the expression) author looked like a sure thing, a shoo-in to avoid and escape every known prize and award. He never figured They would go out and *invent* one just for him. Who would have guessed that the silly little parody magazine, *Poultry: A Magazine of Voice*, Second Series, No. 2 (Fall 1986), p. 6, the selfsame page whereon poet Dave Smith received his richly deserved Pullet Surprise and Charles Simic was named winner of the National Duck Award, would present *Poultry's* First Annual Forgot to Duck Award to my author?

One other thing. A lot of people criticize my bad language. I don't know where they get off bad-mouthing me. Mostly they complain about my constant use of the F– Word. Well, here I am almost halfway through this address, and I haven't used the F– Word one time yet. And I don't plan to, either. Except in that precise form. If I have to, I will use some variation in the euphemism, itself. As in: "F– Word you!" Or "Who invited this F– Wording guy to speak at my graduation?"

Fair enough?

Where are we? Well, you probably know where you are, anyway. Sitting out there in your rented cap and gown getting ready to graduate. Real life is waiting. Like a cop behind a tree or a billboard. About 15 minutes, on average, after you turn in your cap and gown, it's going to start to dawn on you. How you have spent a whole lot of money, yours and other people's, and, minimum, four years of precious time, to acquire a rolled up piece of paper that won't buy you a beer or a cup of coffee. F– Worded again! And bear in mind that this isn't the last time you will hear from the folks here. This institution has already targeted you as a source of funds for the future. Your name is already in the computer.

How are you ever going to earn enough money to be able to afford to give them some of it? If you are rich already, then just don't worry about it. Statistics prove conclusively that, barring the Nuclear War, which will change everybody's luck and numbers significantly and looks like a more attractive prospect every day, you will most likely stay rich or end up even richer. Numbers also prove that most of you will stay pretty much the same as you are. You will never quite realize it because you will be earning more dollars. But those bucks will always be worth less and will buy less. In the end you will be very lucky if you make as much as your old man whether he went to some college or not. Unlike him, you stand a good chance of never being able to own your own house. You will, however, make out a little better, in the long run, than if you had *not* attended college. Let that truth cheer you up every spring at Tax Season. And you can take some consolation in the fact that you will be supporting at least one other guy (more if the F– Wording Liberals come back in fashion) who may or may not have been to high school or college, but who never cared if school kept or not. Who is perfectly happy to take your money and use it to F– Word a whole lot more than you have time or energy for, to drink, to smoke Mexican Mary Jane and snort Columbian snow, to sing and dance, play the banjo, and then, for serious fun and games, to go out and yoke and mug your old, crippled grandmother. Try to be positive about this. It helps to think of the fellow (or fellows) you are supporting as being, in a real sense, your own more ethnically interesting other half or shadow self. When things get really dull, when hard labor and drudgery are all, you can pause to think of him and what he is up to, relishing the vicarious experience of it all.

I don't want to get into a taboo subject like politics, but I feel I should point out that much which you learned here is, well . . . *inapplicable*. Don't take my word for it. Read *America in Perspective* by (no kidding) Oxford Analytica. They claim that political parties, Democrats and Republicans, Dixiecrats and Progressives, Commies or Nazis, don't mean much any more. What we have really comes down to is Right-Wing Rednecks and Liberal Pussies. Nothing in between. The RR's are invincibly ignorant and darn proud of it. They can't (or won't) find places like Liberia and Nigeria on a printed map. They can't pronounce the capital of Honduras. They are adamantly unpersuasive, and they don't care. That's a very large part of their charm. The LP's, on the other hand, are usually very persuasive (partly because they own all the means of persuasion), and their charm is just charm. Their chief domestic goal is to take *all* of your hard-earned money and give it to that shadowy fellow you have been supporting all along. Whether he will then share it back with you or blow it all on a Mercedes remains to be seen. Judging by the example of his (excuse me) Third World kinfolk, he will go for the car. LP's believe in national defense without resort to deadly force, and they are prepared to negotiate about anything. They like to give things, especially other people's things, away. High on the LP giveaway list are Florida and Alaska. The only thing RR's and LP's have in common is the desire to F– Word you and me and anybody else they can catch in the missionary position.

Speaking of which, I guess I better at least mention Feminism and The Sexual Revolution. Feminism has been a huge success. It put the women to work so guys can goof off more and don't have to pay as much alimony and child support when we move on to greener grass and younger stuff. It has also worked out that most of *them* can't ever make enough money ever to feel free and secure. If and when we want them back, they have a very powerful incentive. As for sex, the basic stuff, well, let's face it, the great advantage of the feminoid, on-top position is that they have to do most of the work.

Of course, the collapse of The Sexual Revolution is changing everything. The leaders, those who haven't had strokes or been shot or something, are praying night and day that somebody will come up with a quick and easy miracle cure for Herpes II and AIDS. Good luck to them! But, cure or no, it looks like serious masturbation is here to stay.

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Never mind, it's one thing that most of you kids are really good at. Cultivate a full rich fantasy life and try to behave yourself. Being an integral part of someone else's fantasy life, maybe that's the modern definition of true love. . . .

Where does all this leave us, except almost out of time? Since this is a (pardon) commencement, we need to end on an uplifting note. In a few minutes I am going to have to climb back between the pages of my book. At the same time you are going out into the Real World. I don't envy you. I believe there is some kind of a natural law (probably a matter of hydraulics) which keeps *the level of corruption* just about the same in every given area of human endeavor. No matter what you do or don't do, the natural depravity quotient will remain roughly the same. The Arts are an exception, attracting more than an average share of scumbags. But please remember we are an open, free society. And one good working definition of freedom is they can't make you be an artist and you don't even have to pretend to appreciate Art. Be careful, though. Best to keep your aesthetic contempt to yourself.

Let me conclude with a few words about Freedom. Since the *economic* aspect of the American Dream is long gone, except to people coming here from Latin America or other places like (pardon) Bulgaria, Freedom is the main thing we have got left. Enjoy it. We have fairly free speech. You can say pretty much what you want to, including the F– Word, provided you do not openly or seriously question any of the assumptions which grease the cogs and wheels of our society. I wish I had time to discuss some of those assumptions with you. But you know them all already or you wouldn't have come this far. You have learned a thing or two. You know how to watch what you think. That's where all serious trouble begins, with unmonitored thinking. At this late stage of your development, while you are as good-looking and healthy (even though plenty of you are as plain as pig tracks and probably feel lousy a whole lot of the time) as you ever will be, it will not occur to you to question anything important. And even if it does occur to you, not to worry and never mind, you won't know how.

Maybe you are wondering where a fictional character, a truly bookish guy, gets off making big fat generalizations like that. I mean, here I am, about as alien as ET, trying to tell you things about yourselves that you don't even know. You want to know what some other aliens, smart and legal ones and not a bit fictional, have said? Here's Solzhenitsyn and his notorious 1978 commencement address at (pardon) Harvard: "Enormous freedom exists for the press, but not for the readership, because newspapers mostly give emphasis to those opinions that do not too openly contradict their own and the general trend. . . . Nothing is forbidden, but what is not fashionable will hardly ever find its way into periodicals or books or be heard in colleges. Legally, your researchers are free, but they are conditioned by the fashion of the day." Well, you can shrug that off. He's a Rusky who never went to college and spent more years in the Gulag than I have in my book. They didn't even have TV in Siberia. No wonder he can't tell Kiwi from Shinola. . . . Well, then, here's another who, even though he's a foreigner, too, had a better (British) education than any of you did. Here's V.S. Naipaul, in 1979: "The young people at the university, the ones you try to talk to, are really like old men. Their minds are closed, by television discussions, by newspapers, by their own successes." Get it? Good, but don't worry about it. Always remember that being happy is the best F– Wording revenge. Always remember the handy-dandy, accurate definition of happiness—the state of being well-deceived. And I hope you will all live happily ever after.

Thanks for your kind attention. May the good Lord bless and keep you all.

A SOVIET PSYCHOSIS? *by Arnold Beichman*

As Mikhail Gorbachev moves forward in his role as the new *Vozhd* of the USSR, he must take pride in a unique achievement. In a few years, he has managed to internationalize a Russian word—*glasnost*—and by its repeated use at home and abroad has dazzled the world with miracles that have yet to materialize. Whatever great reforms he pulls out of his hat, however, liberation of memory is the one which the ruling Soviet ideology cannot tolerate, for the power of memory is the human attribute most dangerous to a totalitarian rulership. For Soviet satraps, the safest and most useful human condition is amnesia. True, there is a certain process of recall which vegetates between real memory and amnesia: It is selective memory by which *Homo sovieticus* accepts what the party wants remembered.

Arnold Beichman is Research Fellow at The Hoover Institution. He is the author of several books and coauthor of a biography of Yuri V. Andropov.

Soviet man lives constantly racked between memories. He must be prepared to blank out—in an instant—one memory—something he has actually seen with his own eyes or heard with his own ears or read in a newspaper or book—to reregister another memory of a pseudo-event, which he has not seen, read, or heard and which likely never happened. "A" can become "non-A" in a twinkling.

Freedom of memory—the choice to remember or not remember—is perilous to the Politburo and to the Central Committee, because it threatens the structure of The Single Lie which props the Soviet Union within and makes it acceptable beyond its borders as a perfectly normal, everyday nation-state. Freedom of memory demands civil freedoms and a civil society; it is the enemy of comprehensive, redemptive, yet implausible doctrines such as "liberation" and "scientific socialism."

To ensure the success of The Single Lie, everybody in the USSR from Gorbachev down must believe in it, even when pretending not to. Every Soviet action, every Soviet diplo-

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matic initiative, every treaty they sign, their every statistic, decree, and communiqué are lies. There is only one truth: a successful Soviet citizen must remember not to remember, and his memory must tell him not to have one. What happened yesterday happened tomorrow; what will happen tomorrow took place yesterday.

Now The Single Lie is not an everyday phenomenon or form of hypocrisy or propaganda or "disinformation." The USSR is the first state since 1917 which, from its founding to this very day, 70 years later, totally depends on The Single Lie for its legitimacy—in contrast with democratic countries which seek theirs through a constitution, written or unwritten. Whereas The Single Lie provides unlimited power for the Politburo, democratic constitutions limit the power of elected officials. The Single Lie means that nothing in the USSR, except The Lie itself, is ever fixed, or permanent. No value has consistency, no fact remains fact, an event can become a nonevent, and defeat a victory. In his broadcast on V-J Day in 1945, Stalin declared: "The defeat of the Russian troops [by the Japanese] in 1904 left a grave imprint on the minds of our people. It was a black stain in the history of our country. Our people were confident and awaited the day when Japan would be routed and this dark blot be wiped out. We men of the older generation have awaited this day for forty years, and now it has come." No Bolshevik would have said this in 1917. The Bolsheviks had always referred to the Japanese victory *approvingly* because it had weakened Tsarism; but by 1945 there seemed nothing unnatural about it.

A free memory, individually owned rather than collectivized or nationalized, would question the infallibility of the Party-State which, according to Marxism-Leninism, is an unchallengeable, supra-human institution, created by history. Memory must belong to the Party-State, which rules by memory control, or *mnemocracy*, and which alone has the right to create history as The Single Lie, and to continuously reorder the truth.

Sometimes the switch is accomplished with alarming speed. Overnight, in September 1932, Stalin first altered the image of Hitler from Fascist monster to heroic ally and then 21 months later, in June 1941, back to the Fascist monster. As World War II was ending, a further miraculous change was affected in the Soviet historiography: the United States, in official rhetoric, became Hitler's ally along with the "Zionists." Today, Fred Hechinger in the *New York Times* (21 January 86) points out that Soviet high school history textbooks apply the term "imperialist," without distinction, to Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, imperial Japan, and the United States. The U.S. role in defeating Fascism is downplayed and distorted and the Japanese are said to have surrendered in response to the 1945 Soviet entry into the war. In his V-E Day anniversary speech, Mikhail Gorbachev minimized Allied military aid to the USSR saying that this assistance was "not as great as they in the West like to say."

* * *

To understand the meaning of the Party-State's monopoly of memory better, it may be useful to examine the pathology of induced memory loss. *Harrison's Principles of*

Internal Medicine defines memory as "the retention of learned experiences." For this retention, according to the accepted medical knowledge, certain ordered mental processes are necessary. First, the perceived experiences must become a part of the brain's mental activities. This, then, must be followed by the process of "mnemonic integration and retention." Third comes recall, followed, last, by "replay" of the experience. This is a paradigm of the normal condition when memory belongs to a free individual, a *Homo sapiens*. In totalitarian society, the pattern is quite different. Memory, by command, becomes "unlearned" and supplanted by "relearned" nonexperiences. *Homo sovieticus* can never say, "But I remember it differently." *Homo sovieticus* may *know* differently, but may not *remember* differently. The consequences of such public dissent, i.e., of remembering "differently," can be severe. Since the USSR is not governed by rule of law, punishment is unpredictable.

To safeguard himself and his family, *Homo sovieticus* must create for himself a transient historical memory and instill the same failing, with the help of schooling, in his children. For example, according to the *New York Times*, the Soviet high school history syllabus shows mnemocracy at work: "The teaching of history is given the task of forming in youth a Marxist-Leninist world view, deep ideological convictions, a clear, class-oriented approach to phenomena of social life, Soviet patriotism, loyalty to proletarian internationalism, devotion to the party's cause, the task of developing a Communist attitude toward work, a feeling of duty and discipline and irreconcilability to bourgeois ideology." In other words, registering and assimilating unautho-

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rized experience must fail to happen. Yet it is sometimes difficult to create this failure because of circumstances outside total Politburo control: street gossip, things heard accidentally over Radio Liberty or the BBC, conversations with foreign visitors, or overseas travel. Still, the KGB takes care of the street gossip, jamming may hinder the memory-restoring Western broadcasts, conversations with foreigners are discouraged, and travel everywhere is tightly controlled.

What may then happen is that the newly presented material does register but *Homo sovieticus* cannot retain it for more than a few minutes. Access to such memory is denied because it no longer exists. What he has seen, heard, or read contrary to The Single Lie simply disappears. Only the last and latest officially promulgated memory is true and becomes a will-o-the-wisp Single Truth. The result is a severe perceptual dislocation of space and time. This is followed by an acceptance or creation of "false and fabricated accounts of recent events," which coincide with the medical definition of confabulation, the concomitant symptom of Korsakoff's psychosis, defined in Harrison's as "an amnesic confabulatory psychosis."

Korsakoff's psychosis is the behavior norm of Soviet man except, perhaps, for a handful at the top of the *nomenklatura*. Without memory, there can be no fixed chain of events, or causality, no criteria for examining human behavior, and no possible moral judgment. It becomes impossible and dangerous, even for members of the *nomenklatura*, to form lasting moral judgments. For *Homo sovieticus*, everything is *de novo*.

Public life in the USSR astonishingly resembles the set of pathological symptoms described medically as "confusional states." Medical authorities define "confusion" as a general term "denoting an incapacity of the patient to think with customary speed and clarity . . . a derangement of the intellectual function, i.e., an inability to learn, remember, calculate, reason abstractly, etc." Amnesia is defined by them as "loss of the ability to form memories despite an alert state of mind. It presupposes an ability to grasp the problem, to use language normally and to maintain adequate motivation. The failure is mainly one of retention, recall, and reproduction."

"Dementia," on the other hand, is "loss of reason, or more particularly, a deterioration of all intellectual or cognitive functions, without clouding or disturbances of perception. Implied in the word is the idea of a gradual enfeeblement of mental powers in a person who formerly possessed a normal mind." The cure for the Soviet version of Korsakoff's psychosis is often simple: exile or escape from the USSR. In cases of emigrés or defectors, total recall is usually instantaneous. Korsakoff's psychosis subsumes a memory "deranged out of all proportion to all other components of mentation and behavior." It can create what is called "retrograde amnesia," specifically, "an impaired ability to recall events and other information that had been recorded in the mind before the onset of the disease." It can also create "an impaired ability to acquire new information, i.e., to learn or to form new memories." This is called "anterograde amnesia." The victim is said to be "lacking in initiative and spontaneity." (Anyone who has read V.I. Lenin's canonical writings, especially *What Is to Be Done?* knows how violently he warned against "spontaneity.")

* * *

Now there are, from a democratic standpoint, certain disadvantages when a Party-State prevents freedom of memory. For example, there can be no such intellectual discipline as history in the Soviet Union because it could endanger the legitimacy of The Single Lie system. Yegor K. Ligachev, No. 2 man in the Soviet hierarchy is reported by the *New York Times* (24 March 1987) as saying that Soviet history "should not focus solely on mistakes and disappointments." Yet, though various historians in nontotalitarian societies interpret the same events differently, they still all agree that they happened. Such minimal agreement, let alone differences of interpretation, is impossible among Soviet historians unless they are *permitted* to remember a specific event or a specific personality. No Soviet historian could—without permission—publicly *remember* the very existence of Leon Trotsky, let alone discuss his major contributions to the Russian Revolution. It is not that Trotsky is just another Soviet "un-person"—for Soviet historians, V.I. Lenin is the only revolutionary historical personage they may safely remember. Stalin, on the other hand, pops in and out of official Soviet historical consciousness, like his successors. (There is a quip in Soviet academic circles that a Soviet historian is a man who can predict the past.)

Under the Soviet Single Lie, there is nothing in the Soviet annals and archives about Trotsky anyone may remember or investigate because such files simply don't exist, except for those Soviet officials who decide when a new "memory" is to be created. Despite protestations and actions of the American Political Science Association, there can be no political science in the Soviet Union—after all, political science from Aristotle to the present is intended to question and empirically test findings, conclusions, theories, and propositions regardless of the authority behind them. Such political science depends on freedom of memory, a state of affairs which cannot exist in a Party-State which has expropriated personal memory.

* * *

Almost half a century ago, Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky and seven Soviet generals were executed at Stalin's command. On 13 June 1937, all Soviet newspapers published a "command to the Army" signed by Marshal Voroshilov, then war commissar, charging those executed with having been Nazi spies and conspirator-wreckers who had tried to provoke war against the USSR.

In 1958, Tukhachevsky and some of the generals were, at the instigation of Nikita Khrushchev, given a posthumous rehabilitation. (Six years later, in October 1964, Khrushchev himself was given the heave-ho and anathematized as a "harebrained schemer.") So we have: from one memory—Stalin's extermination of the Soviet General Staff—to another memory—the rehabilitation of some members of the same staff—to a third memory: the rehabilitation of Stalin himself. Who knows what the fourth memory will be?

In Khrushchev's "secret" anti-Stalin speech of 1956, Stalin was described in language which might have put to

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shame even some anti-Communist rhetoricians. Khrushchev accused Stalin of mass murder, exterminations, megalomania, torture of even his closest collaborators, failure as war leader, cowardice, hysteria, caprice, and despotism. Such a memory—anti-Stalinist in content but not, of course, anti-Leninist—was permitted only to the top Soviet leadership, since the speech has been published only in the West, though its contents were known to party members. For a while, the new memory was allowed even some lesser personages, like Solzhenitsyn (who, during the so-called thaw, published *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*). But Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech as a part of The Single Lie was no different from Stalin's *volte face* about Hitler between 1939 and 1941.

With Khrushchev's ouster, what little was left of the anti-Stalin memory was replaced with new versions under Khrushchev's successors, Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko, and now Mikhail Gorbachev. In keeping with their mnemocratic policies, Soviets today act as if Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech at the 20th Communist Party Congress had never been heard, because it was never made. The new memory demands the rehabilitation of Stalin.

It is worth examining Gorbachev's V-E anniversary speech of May 8, 1985, from the standpoint of memory control. Gorbachev blamed "imperialism" and its Munich appeasement policies for World War II. He ignored the shocking Soviet-Nazi collusion which began with the signing of the nonaggression pact of August 1939, which, at the very least, made it possible for Hitler to start the world war. He paid special tribute to Stalin's command economy, which, he said, had "proved its viability" and "superiority," while he ignored Stalin's inhumanities and his 1919-1939 reign of terror.

Then Gorbachev, following the example of previous party leaders, praised Stalin's role as wartime commander in chief. Said Gorbachev:

> The gigantic work at the front and in the rear was guided by the Party, its Central Committee and the State Defense Committee headed by the general secretary of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Josef Vissarionovich Stalin.

According to press reports, this part of Gorbachev's speech was received with prolonged applause in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, by an audience of 6,000 war veterans, army officers, party members, and workers. These then were 6,000 Soviet citizens who fit the Korsakoff psychosis. They accepted "false and fabricated accounts of recent events," illustrating the amnesiac confabulatory disorder described earlier. For them it was perfectly normal behavior. That the number of Stalin's victims is conservatively estimated at 20 million at least (coinciding with the USSR's total war losses as cited by Gorbachev) was overlooked by both Gorbachev and the Soviet media. As far as Soviet memory is concerned, there were no years of terror during the Stalin era.

On Soviet television a special drama series, *Strategy of Victory*, recently emphasized Stalin's wisdom. Forgotten was the de-Stalinization undertaken by Khrushchev, who, for example, in 1961 renamed Stalingrad as Volgograd. Now it may become Stalingrad again because a veterans' association in Volgograd has asked the Soviet Party Central Committee to restore the city's earlier name.

In a recent Soviet film, *Red Bells* (it deals with John Reed, of the *Reds* fame), Stalin emerges as Lenin's closest collaborator, which is pure fiction. Stalin is shown urging Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky to seize the Winter Palace. Says Stalin: "If we do not attack, we shall lose everything." How true that was. All three did, indeed, lose everything at Stalin's hands, including their lives. Soviet mnemocracy does not recall such events. But this mnemocratic spirit may be a continuous feature of Russian history. In 1938, the Marquis de Custine described a tragic accident in the Gulf of Finland when a sudden squall sank many boatloads of people sailing from Petersburg to a royal gala at Peterhof. There was no mention of the tragedy in newspapers, it was not discussed—it simply hadn't happened. As Custine observed:

> In Russia history forms part of the domain of the crown; it is the moral property of the prince, just as the people and the land are his material property; it is kept in the storeroom along with the imperial treasures, and only that part of it which the ruler wishes to make known is displayed. The memory of what happened yesterday [the accident on the Gulf of Finland] is the property of the Czar; he alters the annals of the country according to his own good pleasures and dispenses, each day, to his people the historic truths which accord with the fiction of the moment.

Case histories of Soviet memory control are infinite since the story of the Soviet Union is first of all memory control. From this mnemocratic system comes The Single Lie/Single Truth system which means that everything said, published, broadcast, or otherwise disseminated by the USSR, inside and outside its borders, is simultaneously both a truth and a lie. Nothing held as true today will necessarily be true tomorrow. Moreover, it is assumed it will not be true tomorrow.

Nothing so exemplifies The Single Lie/Single Truth system as the Soviet constitution, whether Stalin's or Brezhnev's. It is rare one can say of any text that virtually every word in it is a lie including "and" and "the." From the constitution's preamble and chapters I to IX (with the exception of chapter VIII, which, not altogether truthfully, describes the emblem, flag, anthem, and capital of the USSR) every word in it is false, including the famous Article 72 ("Each Union Republic shall retain the right freely to secede from the USSR").

Alain Besançon, the French historian, says that the Soviet lie "is not a lie. It is a false pretense of a lie, a lying lie, a pseudo lie. In that country everything is false, even the lie":

> [W]hen Brezhnev, after Lenin, declares that the Soviet citizen is the freest in the world, he is not lying. He is basing his statement upon pseudo reality, where words receive a new and very specific meaning. According to that same ideological reality, the Swiss citizen does not enjoy freedom. The opposite of the lie is truth, which is given a

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Poem

by Andrei Navrozov

Geisha—gazelle or gypsy,
Quietly sad, or sly?
Wild, like spring in Ipswich,
Sudden, like winter's flight?

Breathe, and the sun is setting.
Stop, and the crickets sing.
Evening, like circus netting,
Noiselessly closes in.

Real? Try to distinguish!
Honest? The ghost of Banquo—
Spilling, like fluent English,
Over the gray embankment.

What else is there to observe,
While the tongue ties, panicking,
All of you to a single nerve,
Motionless as a mannequin . . .
Geisha—gazelle or gypsy,
Bolting away or dancing?
Kind as an elipsis,
As a long winter's passing.

> different name. Within ordinary reality, the opposite of freedom is slavery. If two people in a conversation agree upon the same word, but not upon the reality to which it refers, that same word will mean two different things. And so the opposite of freedom, in the Soviet sense, is what we call freedom. The opposite of detente is detente. The opposite of the defense of peace is the defense of peace. Contrary to the accepted idea, the Soviet world is characterized not by double-talk but by single-talk/single-talk within duplicate realities. One word, two realities.

The tragedy of the Soviet people (the people of East Europe do not suffer to the same degree from Korsakoff's syndrome) is that they must, though physically healthy, behave among themselves as victims of Korsakoff's syndrome. Since they must be pro-Stalin one day, anti-Stalin the next week, pro-Stalin the following month, anti-Stalin a year later and then pro-Stalin still another year thence, there is nothing for them to do but lapse into anterograde amnesia—that is, an impaired ability to acquire new information, to learn, or to form new memories. For example, a geneticist might one day be required to believe in Lysenko and another day in Vavilov, and any mistake in his timing might cost him his career or freedom or even his life. The effects of such a mental state might be described as an acceptance of unlimited restrictions on thought and action since everything might be forbidden in the future or it might already have been forbidden but not publicized and, moreover, be retroactively punishable. Also, some things may be forbidden to some but not to others. The question to be asked, then, is this: If he is behaving like a confabulatory amnesiac every moment of his waking life, can *Homo sovieticus* be a truly normal human being?

The psychological and even physical consequences of constantly living falsely were once summed up by Boris Pasternak:

> The great majority of us are required to live a life of systematic duplicity. Your health is bound to be affected if, day after day, you say the opposite of what you feel, if you grovel before what you dislike and rejoice at what brings you nothing but misfortune.

While the Korsakoff syndrome may affect millions of people in the USSR, there are tens of thousands of others, primarily intellectuals, living in democratic societies, who seem to be victims of this malady as well. As Alexander Zinoviev has written:

> It is the intellectuals who are now the real bearers of the communist tendency in the West, not workers and peasants. The communist system is a kind of paradise for intellectuals. A shabby and dirty paradise, but paradise all the same.

These willing and witting Western political pilgrims see the USSR as an aberrant Utopia, arguing that if the USSR is bad, the U.S. is worse; yet who controls their memory? Nicola Chiaramonte, the Italian political philosopher, once raised this question in *Survey*: How could a great physicist like Paul Langevin, "who would not have accepted the smallest mathematical or physical proposition without a long series of proofs and counter-checks, when faced with the prosecutor [Andrei] Vishinsky's charge claiming to have proved Trotsky's intention to sell the Soviet fatherland to international capitalism, agree without question to support the condemnation of the 'traitors'"?

What is it that distorts the sense of reality of the moral equivocators, the anti-anti-Communists, the fellow travelers, the Marxist academics and their acolytes, the neutralists, and the Korsakoff neurotics in our pluralistic societies? Or of a fool like Phil Donahue who really believes that the Soviet citizens he put on one of his television shows are free to speak their minds like their American counterparts?

The great peril which endangers world peace and freedom is the Soviet power over its people's memory. A dictator who was far worse than Hitler, if only because he lived and lasted longer, is being turned into a folk hero by his successors. Can there be genuine peace in freedom when hundreds of millions of Soviet peoples must live degraded by a system of memory control never before seen anywhere?

More than ever before, the Western nations must endeavor to restore and expand the remembrance of things past among the exploited and downtrodden people of the USSR. The Single Lie can only survive in a world of willing or unwilling amnesiacs. Free societies can restore the human balance which The Single Lie/Single Truth system seeks to destroy. But only if they themselves grow militarily strong, remain morally free and united, and refuse to accept every abomination in the name of survival.

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ADVICE TO A POSTULANT-PROFESSOR

by Jacob Neusner

If I could tell every first-year graduate student in America one thing, it is this: *The campus is not a calling, it is just another career.*

If university teaching serves your purposes, come and join us. If not, follow your star in a different firmament. In graduate school, learn in order to sell your knowledge and make a living. And make your living in ways that sustain your interest. The challenge of life to people with intellectual gifts is to avoid boredom, to remain engaged. Others do not need what you do. That is what has drawn you forward to graduate school, that curiosity and a will to know. Then, if it serves your personal purposes to get a Ph.D. and go on to work as a professor, do it.

When I aspired to life as a professor, it was for three reasons: to learn, to teach, to share. The learning went better than I hoped, the teaching much less well, and, with few exceptions, I have known little sharing. If you see the life of teaching and scholarship as a mode of service, as an expression of idealism, your vision discerns what is not there. That calling—a vocation to civil debate and discussion about matters of reason, and that commitment to teach through discovery and to impart knowledge through engagement of mind to mind—those ideals out of a distant, gentle past today do not serve. They are not even wanted. If you do come to the campus with that calling to reasoned inquiry, you will suffer derision and finally destruction.

At this season in graduate schools all over America, tomorrow's generation of college and university professors take up the tasks of first-year graduate students. Let me tell them how things look from the other end of an academic career. You are in your early 20's, I am in my middle-50's. You are starting out, I am nearly finished.

Before me I see young men and women who have completed first-class B.A.'s and have therefore gained a vision of themselves as future scholars and teachers, professors to the coming generation of students. They have chosen to prepare for a life of teaching and research, keeping to the path they chose when they entered college as freshmen. Clearly, the first four years, when they finished their initial education, made them want more. So these young people, in their early 20's, choose to go forward, toward the Master's and then the Ph.D. Thirty-seven years ago I entered college, and I never left—or wanted to leave. After nearly four decades of university life and nearly three decades of teaching and publishing research of my own, what have I to offer as advice to the next generation?

The universities and colleges you will inherit are not the ones we came to build, and, it follows, the way we shaped our lives should not be yours. We shaped our careers to serve three causes: scholarship, teaching, collegial citizenship. We deemed success the writing of books, the raising up of a new generation of thoughtful students, and the sharing of common responsibilities in the building of a campus community of intellect and heart. We measured success by our capacity to contribute to knowledge in some specific way, to share knowledge with others, both in writing and in the classroom, and to learn from others and join with others in a common life of intellect. We did not succeed all the time, or even very often. But these formed the royal way, the golden measure: scholarship and learning, teaching and sharing, citizenship and caring. It was a gracious ideal, a nourishing and caring faith of the academy and in the academy. We formed that faith not within our own minds alone but in what we saw in the generation that had brought us up.

Our ideals were right for the time in which we shaped them. They are wrong for your time and will not serve in the universities that you will soon inherit. We—many of us—wanted to continue a life of learning, which meant to pursue a curiosity that led us we knew not where or why. So do you. And if you wish to conduct your own research and scholarship, in our day and society, most of you can do it only in universities or colleges. There is no living to be made outside of the academy in most academic fields. True, in engineering, many of the hard sciences, and mathematics, you can hope to pursue research not supported by teaching—hence as a professor in a college—but supported in research institutes, corporations, government, and the like. In the social sciences, sociology, political science, and economics, for example, there are research institutes in which you can make your way. But unless you have inherited money, on a full-time, lifelong basis, you cannot study Greek and Roman literature or medieval history or English literature or religion or other of the humanities, unless you get a Ph.D. and work as a college professor. And if that is what you want to do, then you should get the Ph.D. and follow that curiosity that draws you forward into the field of your choice.

To state matters bluntly: if you have to teach in a college in order to pursue the research you wish to undertake, then go, teach. Otherwise, pursue learning in some other setting. Universities these days are not led by scholars and educators, and they do not value teaching or scholarship. Writing a book will make you many enemies, but it will not win you much appreciation for your gifts to your field. Teaching through engagement with your students will make your students hate you, and it will not gain for you the respect and appreciation of anyone on the campus or off. Commitment to the life of your department and university, service on committees, devotion to excellence in the conduct of the life of the academy—these supererogatory tasks will win for you the enmity of those with whom you work and the appreciation of no one.

The things we thought mattered when our generation came on the scene—scholarship, publication, an engagement with students' minds, commitment to excellence in our campus—these no longer find a place on the campus.

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Universities have become places of privilege and self-indulgence, in which boredom—the cost of easy tenure based on political considerations, not accomplishment—reigns; energy and commitment to learning defy the norm. Tenure marks not achievement but acceptability, and those who go along get along. The road to success is withdrawal and disengagement. As in prison, so in a professorial career you do your own time. But here you locate yourself by choice—because it is where you can do things you think worth doing, and for that reason you accept the restrictions of the place. If it is worth your while, if a career on the campus allows you to pursue interests to which you wish to devote your life, then it is the right place for you. Otherwise, it is not.

If you want mainly to teach, and if to you teaching means engaging with other people, not merely telling them things but offering them the challenge of discovery and exploration, the campus is not your home. The better high schools and prep schools want your kind of teaching. University students want to be told things; these they will tell back to you, in exchange for the grade, leading to the document. They come to gain credentials and, by the way, possibly to learn this and that. They do not come for challenge, and do not challenge them. If you want to teach, go where teachers are wanted.

If you wish to join a community of learning women and men, people who talk together in a common conversation, the university has nothing for you. The received conception of faculty congeniality, the notion of the courtesies of the academy, the limits of civil discourse and the requirements and prerequisites of serious, engaged argument—these today turn out to be fictions. Presidents, provosts, deans dismiss the faculty's knowledge as trivial and determine without consulting professors what universities should teach. When people undertake argument, it is now to humiliate and destroy, not to learn and to teach. Disagreement with civility is a fantasy. Scholarly interchange provokes total war, with no taking of prisoners. Treat a subject someone else has covered and reach parallel conclusions? You will find yourself accused of plagiarism. Propose a new idea? You will be told that no one has to read your book, you are not on the scholarly canon. Take a risk, make a mistake? Your career has ended. Defend with your life the right of the other to speak? Not on the campus, where civil disorder has replaced civil discourse and where the student censorship of free expression merely apes the incivility of professors accorded to anyone who happens to annoy them for any reason whatsoever. I do not know where you will find that academic community of learners, that world in which rules of civility and reasoned exchange formed the requirements of citizenship. But you will not find it on any college and university campus you are likely to find a job.

On campuses today, the gentle virtues of learning give way to more robust values of politics and management. If you want to teach, there are better places in which to do it than colleges. If you want to pursue scholarship as an exercise in ongoing curiosity, in many fields there are better opportunities, and more agreeable situations, than universities. It comes down to this: If you have to use universities in order to conduct a career of learning, then use them.

Use them, do not serve them, do not believe in them, do not try to build them or improve them or commit yourself to them. Do what you have to do to earn your living, which is a minimal classroom performance, and, for the rest, pursue your interests essentially on your own. Then the university as it is today is the right place for you to achieve your purposes—but only then. The university that we served no longer requires the kind of service that we gave. The one to which you come does not want the sort of service that our generation, for its part, imagined was demanded.

Do not give yourself to your students. They do not want you for your learning, and, if they want you for anything at all, it will prove demeaning.

Do not serve your college community through sustained committee service, contribution to the life of your department. That brings only contention and conflict and in the end—if you do the work honestly and seriously—will make you enemies.

Do not take seriously serious discourse with your colleagues. They have their own agenda, their personal program, and will not appreciate your meddling in their minds.

If you want to find acceptance, do not write too much, do not disagree with other people, do not say anything new, and do not criticize anything anyone else says or does. Go along, and you will get along.

Today, for people of intelligence and sensibility, there is only one reason to pursue a career as a college or university professor, and that is to pursue one's own research and publication. To do that, you will survive on your own campus if you engage with others in your field in other colleges and universities, publish only for specialists in your narrow area, and isolate yourself from your own campus. Then you may survive. And, if you do, you will enjoy that opportunity, available in no other way I know, to work full-time and all the time in those areas to which your curiosity draws you, to learn and grow and mature: within, on your own, and by yourself.

Today, for those who wish to sustain scholarship, universities offer one opportunity—and perhaps the only one. Universities two generations ago were not the main or the only medium for scholarship, and many of the great discoveries in the humanities and sciences from the Enlightenment to our own century did not come from people who held professorships. People drawn by curiosity found ways to make a living—or lived on inherited wealth—and pursued their scholarship. Darwin and Freud pursued their research without university support. And many of the most important ideas that shape minds now came from people who made their living other than through university teaching—and some of them did not even have doctorates. Yet they made their discoveries and gained a hearing for their ideas. Today, much research, even when conducted in universities, finds support other than through students' tuition. That is the reason, the only reason, for seeking employment in colleges and universities as we now know them. For they have ceased to be communities, and they are in the main not very academic.

If I had to do it all over again, would I give my life to learning and teaching, sharing and building? Yes, I would do precisely what I did with my life: get learning, pursue

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learning. But I would do it for different reasons, and I would do it in a different way.

I would do it for one reason only, which is, as I said, because if you want to be a scholar, you have to make a living, and for many subjects you can make a living as a scholar only in a university. And I would do it not as I have done, giving half my energy and commitment to students and half to scholarship. I would give all of my energy and commitment to scholarship and leave over only what I absolutely had to reserve for a minimal accomplishment of such tasks as teaching as I could not decently avoid.

In sum, here is my best wisdom for the next generation, as just now it begins work for the Ph.D. and a life of learning:

(1) Scholarship, in published form, is all that matters in graduate school and in your career beyond. Pay no attention, now or later on, to issues of higher education and the larger setting of the university. These should not concern you.

(2) Do not think of yourself as an educator, let alone as a teacher, but only as a scholar. If you have to make a living in the academy, teach as little as you can, to as few students as you can, and avoid all engagement with students. And, for the rest, no committees, no politics, no involvements; just read and write.

(3) Take from the university what it has to give you, but give nothing more than your scholarship, which is to say, nothing the university wants or values. Leave the university to those who wish, today, to make of it what they will: the presidents, provosts, and deans, on the one side, and the students who come and go, on the other. They will do as they like, anyhow, so keep out of their way and do your work. Use them, as they use you, and you will have a useful career—for yourself and for your field of learning, and these are all that matter.

Let me explain how things were the way they were—and why they changed. We who began in the 1950's and saw the 1960's as assistant professors and the 1970's and 1980's as the senior faculty and now move toward our final decades of teaching and publishing research, took over the dream of an earlier generation and lived through the nightmare of our own times. Our model of the university came to us as the gift of the generation of the Second World War, which brought America to a position of responsibility within the larger world. Universities took on the work of educating young Americans to address that great world beyond. Professors became scholars, not only teachers, responsible for learning more and more about many more things. To do our work, professors had both to learn new things and also to teach worthwhile ones, and students for their part had actually to study. Demanding, serious times awaited. No longer Mr. Chipps, benign but boring, saying over and over again the lessons he had learned from the Mr. Chipps who came before. And no more place for the cheering and singing and the gentleman's C.

What changed? It was the entire configuration of higher education. Colleges became universities, and universities turned themselves into centers of research. Publication mattered. Tenure came to those who produced. Students studied, scholars taught, knowledge expanded and exploded, higher education in America set the standard for the world, as much as German universities had defined the golden measure a century earlier—and with good reason. From our universities came the sciences and the scientists, the social sciences, the humanities revived by fresh questions, the spirit of discovery, the compelling call of vivid curiosity.

In 1950, at the age of 18, I went to Harvard because, so far as I then knew, it was the only university in which research went on. (Of course, I was wrong, but, for an adolescent intellectual in West Hartford, Connecticut, the choices were Harvard, Yale, and Brown, and, among them, only Harvard seemed a place where people read books.) But 10 years later, a dozen New England universities and many score throughout the country had gained that ambition to transform and transcend what in the aggregate formed the great leap forward of America's universities. A new definition of the calling of higher education took hold. We were partners, all of us on the campus, in an adventure of learning. That meant that students would study, not merely gain credentials. Scholars would publish, not merely speculate. Teachers would conduct the classroom as a realm of discovery, not merely as a stage for the rehearsal of other peoples' knowledge and the professor's opinions of that knowledge. Knowledge itself—the definition of what is to be learned for the degree of Bachelor of Arts or of Science—vastly changed. Old boundaries gave way. New subjects found entry.

That was the vision. Along with the best and the brightest I knew, I was drawn to a life of learning: reading and writing, studying and teaching, speculating and testing propositions: what if? and why? and why not? That was the life I chose, and, given the choice again and the years in which to carry it out, I should choose that same life again. But not for the same reasons and not in the same realm of reality.

Our tide flowed in, in the 1950's and 1960's. But it flowed out again. The ebb tide came in the late 1960's and early 1970's. We who then were young, the legacy of the vision of the 1940's and 1950's, sustained the hope that others had given us but confronted a world no one could earlier have conceived. The great Presidents of the 1950's and 1960's were scholars, one and all. They also had the capacity to find the money they needed to build their universities by finding greatness in scholarship. They also were educators who framed success by the criterion of the quality of mind—and, in the colleges, even the character and conscience—of the young people for whom, for four years, they and their faculties bore responsibility.

But in the trials of social revolution and political crisis, when the campus became the battlefield and the college students the shock troops, the scholars and the educators failed and were replaced. What most of them could not and did not do was hold the center. They were educators, scholars, and teachers, not politicians, not managers, not planners of budgets and manipulators of women and of men. And others came along—people thought they were needed—who could do those things. We still on the campus pay the price of the campus revolution of the 1960's and 1970's. And why not? Ours was the mistake, for we believed when we should have doubted, and we thought we could by an act of the faculty senate change human nature,

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reform society, and redeem the world. But we could not even save ourselves and our own ideals when the barbarians came. And come they surely did.

University leadership has now found its definition not in the particular requirements of the tasks of the academy: scholarship and research. Now what the campus needed was what other large institutions—deemed no different from the university in substance, but only in form—also needed. A person with political capacities could move from the Cabinet or the House of Representatives to the campus. A general could turn himself into a college president. So could a chief executive officer of a large corporation. So could a fund-raiser, a foundation program officer, anybody who had shown capacities to control, manage, administer—and it did not matter what. These new types of academic officeholders were not chosen because of achievement in education and scholarship, and they did not value capacity to teach and write—things they had never done and could not do. They were chosen to keep the peace and balance the budget, much as the Lord-Mayor of Johannesburg can keep the peace and balance the budget. And that is what they did.

The ideal of the builders of the 1940's and 1950's produced us, the professors of the 1960's into the 21st century. We received a vision, and we lived by it. The vision discerned a different America and demanded of the academy a distinctive calling. But the academy can yet serve useful purposes, if not the cause of education and citizenship, community and civil discourse, reasoned argument about honorable alternatives. So use it for what it can give: the chance to do your work, that alone. The academy has no room anymore for those who find themselves called to learning and to service. It is a place for careers—and careerists. It is not going to change very soon. Take your pay, and do your job, just as you would in any other corporation, in a normal, utterly professional and impersonal transaction. More is not wanted.

The barbarians have inherited Rome, and, as before, the Dark Ages will endure for some time to come. Soon we shall smell the smoke of burning libraries. It will not be because the books contain subversive ideas, but because administrations wonder, who needs all those books anyhow? Universities served when they served, for a brief spell. Now they become socially useless, too expensive for the students, sustaining self-indulgent and unproductive time-servers who substitute self-righteousness for achievement, self-inflation for accomplishment.

But learning will go forward, if not on the campus, then elsewhere. For the curiosity of humanity draws us onward, and if this kind of institution does not nurture learning, some other will. The will to know, to ask why? and why not? and what if?—that never-to-be-satisfied hunger and thirst will never fail us but will always sustain us. It is what it means to be human.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN GOES TO MOSCOW *by Jocelyn Tomkin*

Who is Mr. Piel? He is an American, a Harvard graduate (1937 magna cum laude), and a journalist who has devoted his career to the promotion of public understanding of science. From 1947 to 1984 he was president and publisher of *Scientific American* and is now its chairman. (In 1984 his son, Jonathan Piel, became editor.) He is a former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), America's premier scientific organization. He has been elected to the Harvard board of overseers twice and has been, or is, a trustee of Radcliffe College, New York University, and the Mayo Foundation. He has received various prizes for popularization of science and in 1980 was the Magazine Publishers Association's Publisher of the Year. In short, he is a well-educated American who, although not famous, is of more than average distinction and influence; a man of achievement who, although associated with science, is not himself an egghead. A biographical sketch notes "he flunked physics and at Harvard he kept a respectful distance between himself and such subjects."

Why did he go to Moscow? To be conferred with an honorary degree (Doctor Honoris Causa) by Moscow State University. What did he say in Moscow? Before we consider his acceptance speech it is worthwhile to enter the spirit of the occasion—a public event at a major university in Soviet Russia.

Official Communist doctrine would have been the approved language of discourse. This system purports to be a *scientific* form of government. Marx and Engels punctuated their writings with allusions to the physical sciences intended to suggest by association that their theories of economics and politics were as well-founded as the law of gravity. For example, Engels' pamphlet "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" argued that Marxism is scientific socialism, whereas other brands of socialism are mere meanderings of wishy-washy idealists. Lenin also invoked science when he defined the "dictatorship of the proletariat." In "The State and Revolution" he wrote: "The scientific term 'dictatorship' means nothing more or less than authority untrammelled by any laws, absolutely unrestricted by any laws whatever, and based directly on violence." Since Lenin's time the use of the name of science to endorse Communist rule has continued; a biography of Brezhnev published in the U.S. in 1978 was written by members of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Some members of Mr. Piel's audience may have had doubts about Communism, particularly its claims to be

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scientific, but, well aware of the high cost of public dissent in the Soviet Union, they would have kept their doubts to themselves. But Mr. Piel, an American, has the good fortune to be a citizen of the freest country in the world. Since he would not, therefore, have been under any government coercion to promote a particular viewpoint, we must assume his words were sincere. He said, in part: "During the past four centuries science has been liberating increasing numbers, now nearly one-third, of mankind from toil and want and even from submission to received authority."

Who are these people, amounting to almost a third of the world population, who are liberated from toil and want by science? The present world population is five billion and a third of this is 1.7 billion, so the group certainly cannot be the Western democracies (USA, Canada, Western Europe, and Japan), whose total population is only 0.7 billion. On the other hand, the 1.6 billion total population of the Communist countries (USSR, its East European empire, mainland China, Vietnam, plus a few less populous countries) is slightly less than 1.7 billion. In other words, the Communist world amounts to nearly one-third of mankind and appears to be the only meaningful group that fits this description. The 2.3 billion combined population of the Western and Communist blocs is significantly *more* than one-third of mankind, so it also seems clear that the group in question cannot include the Western democracies.

Mr. Piel's view of the statistics of global liberation, his argument (made earlier in his lecture) that science is the proper context for Communism (in view of its claims to be a scientific form of government), and the circumstances of his lecture—all these factors must have combined to give his audience the strong impression that he sees Communism as the science that has liberated "nearly one-third of mankind from toil and want." In fact, this is probably the message that *any* potential listener would have heard.

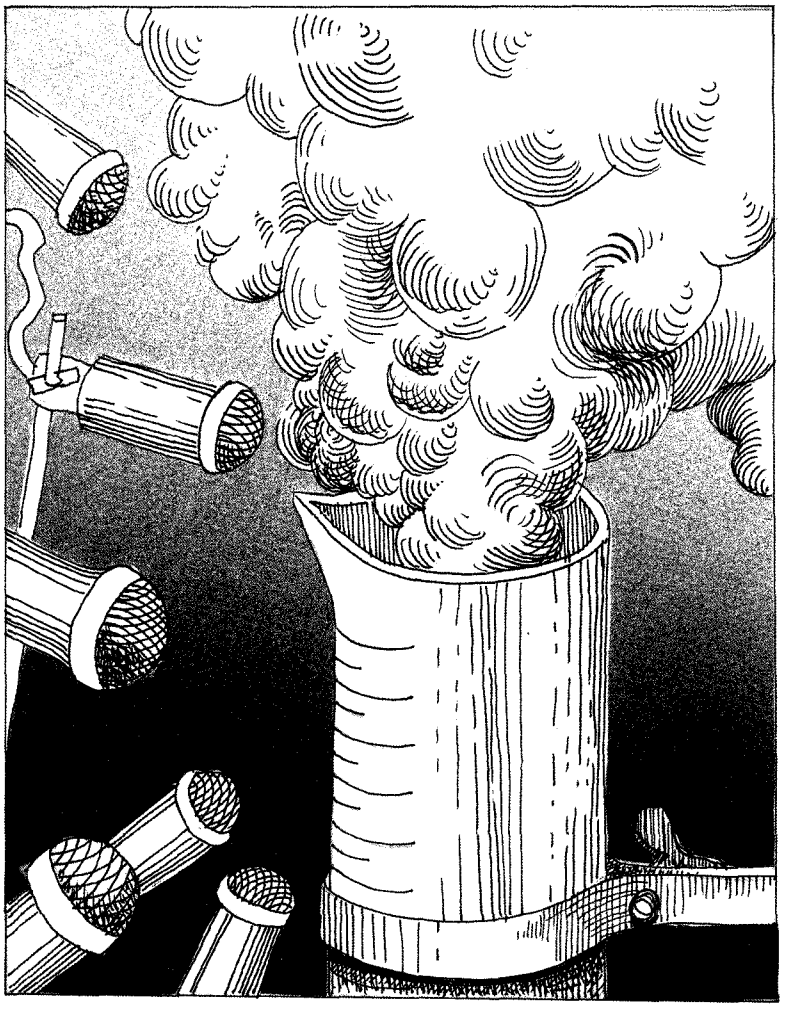
The belief that Communism liberates people does not deserve comment, though Communist ideology does liberate one small group of people—the Communist elite who rule the people in the name of the people. More than 150 years ago Alexis de Tocqueville anticipated the paradoxical possibility that a ruling minority might use "the interests of society" as a shield to protect their power and privilege. He wrote: "Hitherto no one in the United States has dared to advance the maxim that everything is permissible for the interests of society, an impious adage which seems to have been invented in an age of freedom to shelter all future tyrants." It was the Communist elite who were Mr. Piel's hosts and on whose behalf he spoke, knowingly or not.

If Mr. Piel's support of Communism has no objective basis, why does he sound like a Soviet propaganda mouthpiece? Can there be a subjective explanation? Does he have some reason for resenting the U.S. or the free enterprise system? This is hardly likely. In fact, since he and some colleagues bought the title to *Scientific American* in 1947, the magazine has prospered. So much so that for some years now *Scientific American* has been one of the best-known popular science magazines, both in the U.S. and internationally. With monthly sales of 600,000 it has also been one of the most successful commercially (despite losing money in the last year or two).

The abilities, hard work, and guidance provided by Mr. Piel and his associates were undoubtedly major factors in this success story. The measure of this success became evident in the summer of 1986 when a West German publisher bought the privately owned company Scientific American, Inc. for $52.6 million. (As part of the deal, *Scientific American* will continue to operate as an independent enterprise with Mr. Piel continuing as chairman and his son as editor and publisher. Higher offers, which did not include this guarantee of the editorial policy's continuation, were refused.) A news item in *Nature* (10 July 1986) reported Mr. Piel's shareholding in the bought-out company as about one-sixth, in which case his share of the sale would have been about $9 million.

His trip to the Soviet Union to hobnob with the Soviet ruling class was nothing new. For more than 50 years now, fellow travelers have been visiting the land of the victorious proletariat, telling the inhabitants that they are liberated from "toil and want," and then returning to the security and comfort of the unliberated Western democracies. What is new is to see pronouncements such as Mr. Piel's published in the pages of the most prestigious journal of American science.

Science, whose scholarly pages enlighten readers with peer-reviewed research papers, authoritative review articles, and news items, and which has a weekly circulation of



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160,000, presented Mr. Piel's words as an editorial (17 January 1986 issue), along with a footnote which made it clear that it was an excerpt from his Moscow State University address.

Although the appearance of discreetly packaged Soviet propaganda in *Science* was an isolated event—a bland globalism characterizes the typical *Science* editorial on the world scene—it highlighted the extent of science journalism's politicization. The mental texture is routine nuts-and-berries leftism, but with a new spice added by activist senior scientists who, since their participation in the construction of the American nuclear bomb, have been on an extended guilt trip.

Organizations such as the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) promote this political agenda. A January 1986 UCS letter to solicit new members opens:

> Dear Friend,
>
> President Reagan's relentless drive to develop "Star Wars" has become the major obstacle to arms control.
>
> At the Geneva summit, our President wasted an unprecedented opportunity to negotiate with the Soviets. . . .

Apparently the 1980's have modified the 1960's slogan "We must not negotiate through fear, but we must not fear to negotiate" to the simpler "We must negotiate."

Mr. Piel retired from the presidency of the AAAS, which publishes *Science*, in 1986, but during his term both he and the president of the American Physical Society served on the interlocking boards of the FAS, the UCS, the Arms Control Association, and the Pugwash movement. So it's no surprise to find these organizations' politics reflected in the content of scientific journals.

It is *Scientific American* itself which affords the most powerful example. At first blush this would seem to be an improbable suggestion; articles on the origin of the solar system or innovative laser applications in manufacturing do not afford much scope for political bias. But the magazine also has frequent articles about military subjects, particularly nuclear weapons. Since the late 1940's it has featured over 100 such articles, most of them appearing in the last 20 years.

Although the subject of nuclear weapons is unavoidably political—no one would claim that nuclear bombs are built to satisfy scientific curiosity—there is nothing wrong, *per se*, with articles about them. It was the discoveries of science that made nuclear weapons possible, and it is essential that scientists should be able to engage in public discussion of their significance.

But it is precisely this political context—the momentous question of whether the Western democracies will survive, or succumb to, totalitarian encroachment—which *Scientific American* consistently ignores. So great is the gap between the magazine's implicit view of the U.S. position and the actual position in which the U.S. finds itself that a hypothetical U.S. citizen whose sole source of information about the wider world is *Scientific American* would be at a loss to understand why his fellow citizens bear the burden of maintaining a large, modern military.

Instead, the magazine retreats into an escapist world where increases of U.S. military strength *decrease* U.S. security, while increases of Soviet military strength *increase* U.S. security. The reader is not subjected to anything so crude as a declarative sentence—rather, he is invited to see modernization of the U.S. military in a negative light with the Soviet dictatorship as a benign background figure. A 1982 article by Randall Forsberg promoting the nuclear freeze provided an example. At that time (November 1982), when NATO was still a year away from initial deployment of new U.S. Pershing II intermediate-range missiles and cruise missiles, the nuclear freeze's crucial feature was that it would prohibit such deployment while making no demands on the USSR, which was in the process of deploying an estimated 900 warheads on its new SS-20 intermediate-range missiles targeted at Western Europe. "The new SS-20's actually reduce the nuclear threat to Western Europe compared with the old SS-4's and SS-5's they are replacing," stated the article and then soothed any misgivings about this perspective with suitable rationalization.

The magazine's authoritative popular-level articles about science, technology, and medicine, which by their nature are completely apolitical, are a surprisingly effective vehicle for its political agenda. Even though most people have little or no knowledge of science, they are aware that "in terms of the fulfillment of declared intentions, science is incomparably the most successful enterprise human beings have ever engaged upon." They hold science in high regard and, by association, are disposed to hold science-related publications in high regard as well.

Scientific American is a prestigious magazine. Eighty-seven Nobel prizewinners have written for it, and the *New York Times* calls it "this country's and perhaps the world's outstanding forum for communication between the scientists and the intelligent public." In its promotional material, *Scientific American* goes further, billing itself as "The Final Authority." (This boastfulness would make most scientists nervous. Scientists do not expect to uncover ultimate truths; their realization that as the island of knowledge grows so its shoreline with the surrounding ocean of ignorance becomes longer and longer instills a natural sense of humility.) Sad to say, *Scientific American* dispenses not science but a mixture of science and the politics of *The Nation*.

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles*:

Words in Collision

"More and more, poets resemble alchemists or conspirators who communicate in an arcane tongue. Poetic teachings attract only the initiated, the specialists and fellow sufferers who spend their days in libraries and institutes, or gather only for symposiums and congresses."

—from poet Gojko Djogo's "A Mouse or a Prometheus"

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DOGGEREL IN A GOOD CAUSE *by Auberon Waugh*

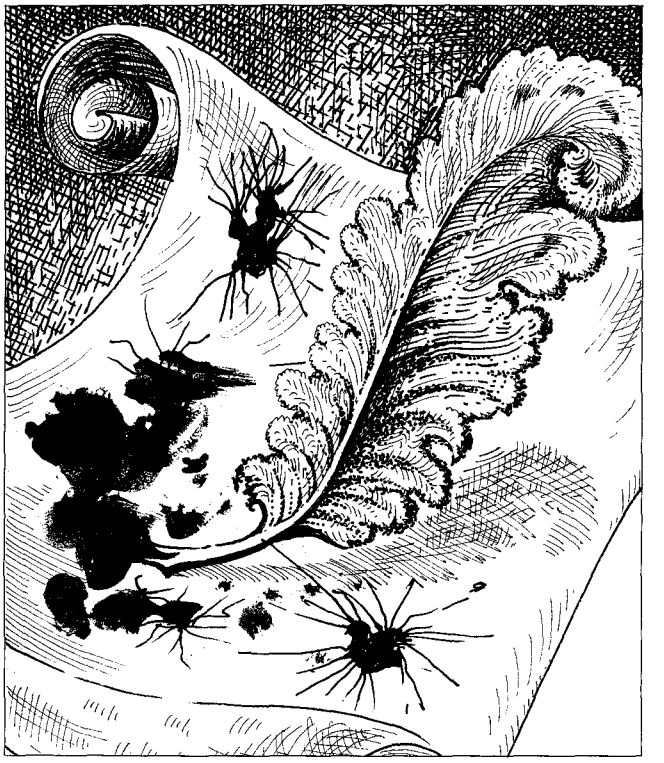
As editor of the *Literary Review*, I am afraid I have formed rather a low opinion of the nation's poets. Every week 20 or 30 offerings arrive through the post, and I often glance at them before handing them over to the magazine's saintly, long-suffering poetry editor. With amazingly few exceptions, these "poems" are prosaic, confused, derivative, usually hard to follow, and often quite unambiguously meaningless. The general atmosphere is one of gloom, which would not matter if there were any compensating originality of perception or joy in the use of words. But the prevailing spirit of dullness and self-absorption produces no emotion stronger than boredom.

In *Images of Africa* (a volume compiled to raise money for the victims of famine), at least, our poets are to be seen in their best Sunday suits, with shining faces. They are assembled together for what everyone must agree is a Good Cause. They are not grubbing around for the £10 fee, which is what the *Literary Review* pays for a poem, and which I suspect is far too much. They are not even grubbing around for grants and bursaries from their local council or regional education authority, although I suppose their inclusion in this anthology will have done them no harm when next they apply. By and large, however, they are simply doing their best to help a continent which is beset by problems which are virtually unimaginable in our own society, where "poverty" is defined as being unable to keep up with the Joneses in the matter of Christmas presents for the kiddies. The problems of Africa are the problems of absolute deprivation: hunger and thirst, disease, lack of clothing and shelter.

Obviously, I would like to claim that, inspired by such a noble ideal, the offerings in this volume are noticeably superior to the general run of what is allowed to pass for "poetry" in England. Reading through the pages, I found five which seemed to possess some spark of vitality. In the light of what I am going to say about the others, it would be as invidious to identify them as it would be to name the one which, for the intellectual vacuity it revealed, its ignorance, its cynicism and maladroitness with words must surely qualify as one of the worst poems ever written in the English language. The purpose of this anthology is not to demonstrate the worst of what is being written in the English language under the name of poetry. Its purpose is to show the sort of thing being written under the name of poetry and only incidentally to demonstrate that even bad poets can have warm hearts. We must never waiver from our central perception that it is all in a Good Cause. If the book had appeared a few years ago, it might have saved some African lives. Even at this late stage, it can do no possible harm and might do some good.

English poetry may be in a sorry state, but Africa is in an even worse one. The difference is that English poetry is at the end of its history, while Africa is still at the beginning. Seventy years ago it was a brave and admirable thing for the poet to express himself in lines which did not rhyme or scan and were comprehensible only to those of his closest friends or most devoted admirers who were prepared to unravel such clues as they could find. Those were days of exploration and discovery, when there were important things to be said, and when the problems of Africa could engage the attention of such tortured geniuses as those of Kipling and Rhodes. What is left of this tradition, the tradition of Eliot and Pound, is a vague equation of obscurity with cleverness, of self-absorption with art, of triviality with elegance. The modern poet for a long time accepted that few people would want to read him and saw this as a tribute to his own superiority. Now, in the post-Modernist age, he would dearly like to be read but has lost the skill to please.

This book should perhaps be seen as a small monument to the death of Western culture. As such, it might well bring comfort to a continent which is experiencing physical tribulations of the sort which beset our own culture throughout its earlier history: famine, plague, war, and tyranny. Since the drought in Africa has receded, a new plague has started up, far worse over there than in its worst manifestations in New York and San Francisco. Perhaps the next volume of British poetry in this series will be devoted to the relief of AIDS in Africa. I look forward to it. Anything should be welcomed which gives the nation's poets something to write about, something to make them feel they have a useful role to play.



Auberon Waugh is the author most recently of Brideshead Benighted *(Little, Brown). Invited to write an introduction for* Images of Africa, *he supplied the present essay, which (unaccountably) the editor declined to publish.*

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A Half-Open Mind *by Paul Gottfried*

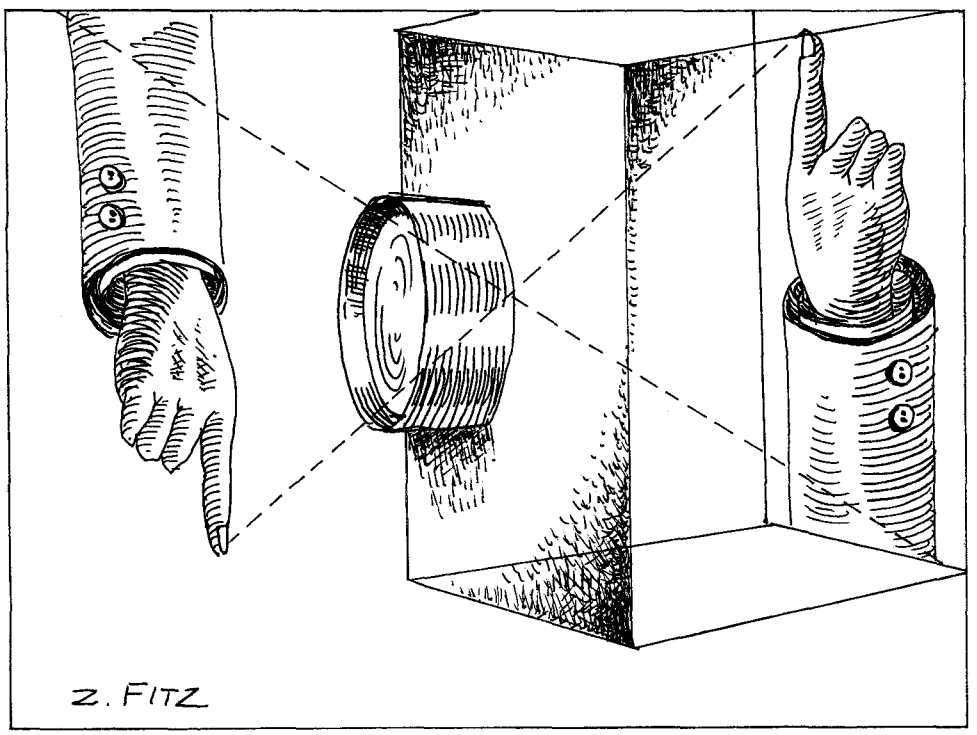
"The discussion is concerned with no commonplace subject but with how one ought to live."

—Plato

The Closing of the American Mind **by Allan Bloom, New York: Simon and Schuster.**

During the month of June, Allan Bloom's observations on the state of American education climbed their way dramatically toward the peak of the *New York Times* nonfiction best-seller list. Why would such a book engage a mass readership? Bloom's prose is neither light nor graceful, and his horror stories about the counter-culture are certainly not fresh. These stories thematically overlap with Midge Decter's *Liberal Parents, Radical Children* (1975), in which Decter told of adolescents and young adults from permissive or experimenting homes who complicated their lives in quest of self-actualization.

The people described by Decter do correspond to types that Bloom (like myself) may have encountered as a professor, but it is hard to see why his reminiscences about burnt-out kids and their swinging parents should occasion such ecstatic approval from *The New Republic, Commentary, Insight, The Nation*, the *Washington Post*, and *National Review*.



Bloom never lets us forget that he was a student of Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago and had taken from this master a world view as well as a way of reading texts. The ancients, Plato and Aristotle, are praised for talking about virtue and truth —although it is never clear whether Bloom believes in either. He does argue that the most important contribution of classical philosophy was to have raised critical questions about the nature and ends of Man, whereas modern thought generally treats such questions as irrelevant. By a series of descents (what Straussians call "crises"), the Western world moved from classical morality through the scientific materialism of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, down to the outright nihilism of the Nazis. "Value-free" social science, existentialism, and popular culture are all seen as symptomatic of the worsening crises that have engulfed Western culture even now in rebellion against classical thought.

This Straussian picture of gloomy and progressive decadence evoked by Bloom is broken by one ray of light. Though John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau are classified as modernists, disciples of Leo Strauss see one or the other as a virtuous pagan. Locke is praised as the Father of the American (democratic secularist) regime, while Rousseau is admired for combining a democratic and contractual understanding of government with a civic religion of sentiment. Most Straussians, including Bloom, try to incorporate one or the other into their pantheon of preferred sages. Despite their materialist views of human nature, either Locke or Rousseau is held up as a proponent of democratic—and therefore good—modernity. Straussians divide between the partisans of Locke and Rousseau, but Bloom tran-

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scends this difference by speaking well of both.

To his credit, he has used arcane Straussian concepts to produce a popular work of cultural criticism. While the Straussian scaffolding creaks occasionally, the tirades against rock music, mischievous Teutons, and sensual excess give the work a lighter (even voyeuristic) quality. It has paid off. An in-depth study of Bloom in the June 19, 1987, issue of the *Washington Post* depicts him as an international celebrity. Flying to dinner with the Mayor of Jerusalem and hobnobbing with academic leaders in France, Israel, and the United States, the author of *The Closing of the American Mind* seems to be less an ivy-tower scholar than someone with connections.

One self-described right-wing populist assured me that Bloom "is agin the counterculture." I'm not sure he unequivocally is—or that his book would be selling so well if he were. For all his unhappiness with student manners, Bloom is no ally of middle-class values or of our commercial Protestant past as a nation. In a revealing attempt to explain European "revolutionaries who accepted our ideals of freedom and equality" but were (and still are) appalled by our unequal distribution of property, Bloom alludes to the efforts of our "domesticated churches in America" to preserve "the superstition of Christianity, [the] overcoming of which was perhaps the key to liberating man." He offers, by contrast, no detailed presentation of the views of the "disinherited of the *ancien regime*." When antirevolutionary ideas are given at all, they are described as "special pleading" and linked to the genealogy of Nazism. But there is one side of the American heritage that Bloom finds congenial: "Our principles of freedom and equality and the rights based on them [that] are rational and everywhere applicable." Bloom notes approvingly that the United States fought the Second World War "as an educational project to extend them."

His view of the American past is highly selective and has no place for either Puritan oligarchs or Southern gentry. Bloom is at bottom a welfare state Whig who welcomes the spread of modern progressive ideals as the actualization of both American and European revolutionary movements. At the same time, he laments the degradation of his ideals in the form of undisciplined students, jarring popular music, and falling educational standards.

There is a paradoxical, even contradictory, tone to his argument, which moves back and forth between praising and damning democracy, skepticism, the Enlightenment, and bourgeois attitudes. Bloom wants an orderly and prosperous society that supports philosophers in their academic redoubts. Significantly, he defines philosophy as "the abandonment of all authority in favor of individual reason" and repeatedly suggests that philosophy must challenge inherited ancestral truths. Never mind, he also tells us, that "concreteness, not abstractness, is the hallmark of philosophy." Like Walt Whitman, Bloom appears to revel in contradiction: In one passage we are told, "The most important function of the university in an age of reason is to protect reason from itself, by being the model of true openness," but elsewhere are warned, "In a democracy the university protects the life of reason by opposing the emergent [sic], the changing, and the ephemeral." In the process, the university fights dogmatism. Its job, then, is to oppose "dogmatism" and support individual speculation—while resisting changing views. Through such resistance (assuming that universities can judge in advance what ideas will be ephemeral), academics uphold the "model of true openness."

One reason for such bizarre reasoning is the pervasive Teutonophobia, which is apparent in his revulsion for the social sciences and most other 19th-century German academic inventions. Bloom scorns any systematic attempt to understand social phenomena that proceeds from data and methodological criteria. He denounces Max Weber, a creator of social science, as a "dogmatic atheist" and nihilistic precursor of Nazism, without demonstrating either. Of course it was Weber and other 19th-century German professors who established professional standards of scholarship in the social sciences. They would no doubt have frowned on Bloom's concept of the university as a place where one man's speculative reason is made to exclude someone else's—in the name of openness and fighting dogmatism.

A colleague of Bloom's has observed that his true educational agenda is to replace modern scientific thinking with classical ideals. That much is true. Bloom does have reservations about scientific thinking; it is also clear that he has no intention of returning to the past, defined as the world before the 1950's. He stresses the connection between scientific materialism and liberal democracy; and while he deplores the nihilistic thrust of "absolute science," he is for democracy and the secular, demystified world to which he finds it related.

Bloom likes what he identifies with the left, rationalism, the Enlightenment, liberal (and even social) democracy. Regrettably, however, the progress of his side has led not to a high civilization but to dirty, drug-infested adolescents and to promiscuous and confused adults. Bloom must encounter these decadents even at the University of Chicago. He is properly alarmed that the new barbarians are threatening the university he once knew. Unfortunately, Bloom can never quite bring himself to recognize the close ties between his religion of democracy cum philosophical skepticism and the cultural trends he deplores.

In one particularly ill-reasoned section, he tries to link the student radicalism of the 1960's to the German historicism of the early 19th century. He then goes on to rail against Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger as enemies of the "universality of the Enlightenment." In the past, Marxists (most prominently from George Lukacs in *The Destruction of Reason*) have attacked opponents of 18th-century rationalism, but Bloom is the first (to my knowledge) to blame critics of the Enlightenment for the New Left as well as for Nazism. The hypothetical link between Romantic conservatives and Nietzsche, on the one side, and the Chicago Seven, on the other, is variously presented as antirationalism, value-relativity, and cultural primitivism.

The link is never convincingly established. Bloom argues without proving that behind our social ills are disagreeable reactionaries who flouted

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equality and social progress and who even, in some cases, defended the self-assertively heroic. These villains produced not only Auschwitz but also the student riots of the 60's and the rock culture of the 70's and 80's. Essential to modern cultural debasement, as viewed by Bloom, was the preaching of historical particularity and a will-centered ethic, which originated in 19th-century Germany. In one dramatic leap, Bloom goes from Nietzsche's (reasonable) assertion that Plato thought as a Greek, not as a German, to value-relativity and to new leftist self-determination. (Among other things, Bloom does violence to Nietzsche's brief against Socrates and Plato. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche rejects Socratic inquiry not as un-German but as inconsistent with the tragic genius of the ancient Greeks. Nietzsche believed that Richard Wagner was reviving that Greek genius through music drama.)

Bloom's polemic against German thought partly coincides with that of another troubled defender of the Enlightenment, Herbert Marcuse. As his student, I was struck by Marcuse's tenacious and sometimes frenetic attempt to uphold the revolutionary heritage. This heritage went from the French Enlightenment and Jean Jacques Rousseau through an essentially rationalist Hegel down to what Marcuse thought was the critical, speculative spirit that he himself represented. Though Marcuse and Bloom would have disagreed on contemporary politics, they would have agreed about the goodness of Rousseau's ethic of sentiment and about the universal applicability of equality. Moreover, most of Bloom's tirade against Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Romantic conservatives, particularly the linking of Max Weber's will-centered thought to Hitlerism, was heard almost verbatim in Marcuse's graduate seminars at Brandeis and Yale. Unlike Bloom, Marcuse helped midwife the New Left. But also unlike Bloom, he did not attempt to attach a rightist legacy of ideas to what was clearly a leftist movement of the 1960's.

For all their faults, Max Weber, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Martin Heidegger faced the consequences of a disenchanted-rationalist society. If none of them offered usable alternatives to the erosion of community and ethics, they knew that democratic equality, acquisitive individualism, and academic skepticism (even if presented as philosophy) would not produce socially virtuous men. Nor will getting students to read "great books" make them civilized, unless, as Alasdair MacIntyre teaches, a living civilization embodies and reenforces the values of its artists and thinkers.

Unlike Heidegger and Weber, Bloom does not take our decadence seriously enough. He is still mostly concerned about getting the students to sit up straight and to stop taking drugs—at least while he has to deal with them. He is also obsessively and perhaps self-interestedly worried about the university, which is only a small part of a much larger battle for civilization. Alasdair MacIntyre and Robert Nisbet have both made attempts to relate our "cultural rot" to the breakdown of ancestral custom and social continuity. Nisbet in particular has

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been struck (no less than Max Weber) by the inevitable relationship between communal disintegration and an unrestricted managerial state. Unlike traditional states which focus on "the political," the managerial state seeks to reconstruct social relations and has become the agent of embattled reformers.

None of these counterrevolutionary ideas may appeal to Bloom and his admirers, but they do explain more about our social problems than do his attacks on the critics of the Enlightenment. As a young professor in the late 60's, I heard radical students appealing to Rousseauistic compassion in the name of the suffering Just. Many of the same radicals proposed their own "educational projects" to extend democratic equality throughout all levels of American society. What I honestly never heard from a student radical was praise of tragic fatalism, or calls for a neo-medieval hierarchy. Perhaps things were different at Chicago!

Marilyn and Gloria *by Janet Scott Barlow*

"Love-making is radical, while marriage is conservative."
—Eric Hoffer

***Marilyn: Norma Jean* by Gloria Steinem, New York: Henry Holt and Company; $24.95.**

One day in the early 70's, I read a magazine article in which Gloria Steinem was reported to have said that she would have no problem continuing her work as a writer should she ever have a baby—she'd do her writing when the baby napped. I can't recall the date I read this, or even the year, but I do remember vividly that it was a rainy afternoon and those words about writing mothers and sleeping babies were responsible for what you could call a significant moment. For I was on that afternoon the mother of two toddlers, one of whom had avoided sleep since birth and continued to defy parental expectations, not to mention physiological law, by thriving nicely without once lying down, much less closing his eyes. And I was certain that if he ever *did* take a nap, I would not sit down to write. I would do instead something meaningful, something important. I would take a nap, too.

Parenthood may be the world's biggest club, but it's not a club without rules. And the first and most inflexible rule is: If you aren't a member, you don't know what the hell you're talking about. (Which is not the same as saying that you automatically know what you're talking about if you *are* a member—but that's a different issue completely.) Gloria Steinem didn't know what the hell she was talking about. And I had the proof—pudgy, cheerful, diapered, and sleepless—right in my own house. The knowledge of this proof was, well, liberating. So liberating that it presented, yes, a Female Option: I could completely ignore Gloria Steinem.

And now, over a decade later, it turns out Gloria Steinem is still at it. She has written a book called *Marilyn: Norma Jean*, in which she demonstrates that feminist thinking has changed through the years only to the extent that it has become even less connected to reality. Ms. Steinem's subject this time is Marilyn Monroe, at first glance an unexpected choice for a feminist writer. But feminists have fallen on hard times since the glory days (people are sick of them—a definite handicap for a social movement), and the subject of Marilyn Monroe seems to offer Gloria Steinem what it offered Norman Mailer—any port in a storm.

Steinem begins her "factual and emotional holograph" of Marilyn Monroe with the assumption that Monroe is a cultural "icon of continuing power," a lasting "part of our lives and imaginations," a woman whose "enduring" force "hook[s] into our deepest emotions of hope or fear, dream or nightmare of what our own fates might be"—in short, a "legend."

Can we stop right there? What is most interesting about this idea of Marilyn Monroe's deep and abiding Legend is that it is universally accepted by those who write about her, and nearly nonexistent to everyone else. Steinem marvels at seeing Monroe's likeness displayed everywhere from dress shop windows to magazine covers and cites these encounters as "everyday signs of a unique longevity." What she actually is seeing are everyday signs of effective merchandising, and what this pervasive merchandising proves is not the strength of Monroe's Legend but the shallowness of it. Marilyn Monroe does not "inhabit" our lives and emotions. To the degree that she exists in our "consciousness" at all, it is as a mind sketch, visual shorthand. A logo.

The notion of Marilyn Monroe's unique and enduring grip on our imaginations has come directly from the imaginations of those who have written about her, writers who invented

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her Legend in order to examine it. It is significant that few of these writers are film critics, and few of the "more than forty books" about Marilyn Monroe deal specifically with her acting. (Once her "luminescence" on screen is acknowledged and her "flair for comedy" discussed, what's left to say?) The best-known of the Monroe chroniclers are from the "cultural critic" mold, and no cultural critic worthy of the name is about to shine his light on a mediocre American actress with a flair for comedy. The Legend of Marilyn Monroe was born because she was *there*, once luminescent, now dead by her own hand, and *they* were there, the culture analysts, just popping with "perspective." (And if the Kennedys figured in there someplace, so much the better.)

Once all the sordid details of Marilyn Monroe's life had been revealed fully and analyzed thoroughly, these writers began repeating themselves and each other, shouting "Legend," whispering "Myth," murmuring "Tragedy" over and over again. And when they could repeat themselves no longer, when the mine was completely played out, they added to their books the Monroe photographs—many, of course, "never before published" —and started analyzing *those*. There are now available what appear to be thousands of "never before published" photographs of Marilyn Monroe, all of them blurring into one picture, just as the books dissolve into one book.

Thus, unsurprisingly, Gloria Steinem's text in *Marilyn: Norma Jean* is the binder for yet another collection of seen-here-for-the-first-time photographs, pictures that are simply one more encounter with the mental outline, one more display of the logo. Still, this is one book that will never dissolve into the others.

With *Marilyn: Norma Jean*, Gloria Steinem has written the perfect companion to a logo: a jingle—a familiar ditty we are meant to associate with a product. The product is, of course, feminism, and this jingle is sung to the tune of "I Am Woman, See My Pain." After ritually declaring Marilyn Monroe an "icon of continuing power" (after all, what feminist wants to hold forth on a logo?), Steinem gets down to business by asking whether, had Marilyn lived, she could "have stopped her disastrous marriages" and "kicked her life-wasting habits." In other words, what would she have been if she hadn't been what she was, i.e., an extremely maladjusted person; and what would she have done if she hadn't done what she did, which was to kill herself. "We will never know," sniffles Steinem. No matter. Gloria Steinem is not seeking an answer. What she's after here is the effect of the question. This type of self-serving nonquestion is the required groundwork, the setup, for the exemption of "cultural victims" from personal accountability for their actions and decisions.

A neglected and traumatized child, Marilyn Monroe grew into an excessive and destructive woman. What Steinem wants us to know is that Monroe was not responsible for her misspent life because not only was her childhood environment beyond her control, her adult environment was, too. If Marilyn Monroe entered womanhood with two emotional strikes against her, it was a sexist society's refusal to offer "respect," "support," and acceptance of her "full humanity" that finished her off. When seen in this light, everything about the disaster that was Marilyn Monroe's life "makes sense."

When, for instance, she misrepresented facts, inventing what Steinem calls "parables," she wasn't lying, because these parables were "always consistent in emotion." When she "ignored her own [financial] security," she wasn't being foolish; she was demonstrating "her emotional connection to ordinary people" and her abhorrence of becoming "one of the rich." If she "exchanged sex for small sums of money from men she didn't have to see again," what counted was that she first "resisted pridefully" and "then [gave] in only when she thought there was no other way out." Her inability to alter her distorted expectations of male-female relationships was largely the fault of her "various psychiatrists," who "did not challenge Freudian assumptions of female passivity, penis envy, and the like." And when she was jealous, paranoid, chronically late, and professionally nonfunctional, it was because "she felt used . . . and perhaps she was." She was, above all, "vulnerable." And it is her vulnerability, above all, with which other women identify.

Here, then, is Steinem's two-pronged thesis: Because Marilyn Monroe (1) couldn't find and wasn't given the strength to change the course of her doomed life, she is therefore (2) some kind of metaphor for American women. This thesis captures perfectly the contradictory message of organized feminism (*Your power is within you—no, it must be ceded to you by others*) and the reason women by the millions avoid it. Any woman who possesses what Marilyn Monroe lacked and Gloria Steinem would give—the personal authority and dignity to live a constructive life—knows (1) that her personal authority and dignity aren't granted or withheld by "society" and never have been, and therefore (2) the story of a movie star who lived badly and then killed herself may suggest a lot of things, but a recognizable female metaphor isn't one of them. If a woman responds to the unhappiness of Marilyn Monroe, her response is human, not female; it is sympathy, not "empathy"; and it's for the fact of Monroe's unhappiness, not the price of it. But Steinem makes sympathy all but impossible by trading the real lessons of Marilyn Monroe's life for a chance to sing the jingle, pitch the product.

If the idea of Marilyn Monroe as an identity figure for American women is bizarre, it is as nothing compared to Steinem's account of Monroe's "dozen or so" abortions. Even as a means of description the words are shocking. A "dozen or so": enough to denote an accumulation; too many to be fixed precisely; *an estimate*. In a statement both pious and obscene, Gloria Steinem labels this pattern of ghastly, habitual destruction "an exaggerated version of most women's struggles to control their reproductive lives." The reason for this "exaggerated" struggle is that Monroe's pregnancies did not occur conveniently "within a marriage and within Marilyn's own life as an actress." And the explanation for the bad timing is: "[O]ne can imagine her sacrificing contraception and her own safety to spontaneity, magic, and the sexual satisfaction of the man she was with." There you have it. Marilyn Monroe had a "dozen or so" abortions because she was too unselfish for her

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own good. And there but for the grace of feminism go we.

As a shameless but fitting finale to this chorus of ideological excuses for personal dissipation, Gloria Steinem has donated her writer's fee from *Marilyn: Norma Jean* to a "project" of her own creation, something called the Marilyn Monroe Children's Fund. The name of this fund honors Marilyn Monroe's "special kinship with children." Its work will "continue something that Marilyn herself cared about."

And logos count as legends, and babies sleep at their mothers' convenience.

Lillian Hellman, True and False *by Arthur Eckstein*

"Female murderers get sheaves of offers of marriage."
—Shaw

Lillian Hellman: The Woman Who Made the Legend **by William Wright, New York: Simon & Schuster; $18.95.**

In a recent issue of *The Nation*, John L. Hess complains about the current flow of books demythologizing the venerated martyrs of the American left. So what if new historical research suggests that the Rosenbergs (or at least one of them) were actually guilty? So what if the same is true of Alger Hiss—and even Sacco, of Sacco and Vanzetti? It was all so long ago. It's time to move on now; *new* issues call—like Irangate and the delicts of the *contras*. Hess's concern over obsession with the past was provoked by William Wright's new biography of Lillian Hellman. In a way, he has a point. Since Hellman was at best "a good second-rate playwright," it's not immediately clear why a biography of her should rate (as this one did) the lead article in the *New York Times Book Review* as well as the front page of the *Washington Post Book Review*.

The answer has to do not with the intrinsic importance of any of these people, but rather with the cultural importance they have gradually achieved as they have been crafted, over time, into *symbols* of American political life. The Rosenbergs have become at worst merely minor-league atom-spies, but for the past 35 years their unkind fate has been used by the left as an indictment of the corruption, repression, and even racism of the American judicial system—most recently in the 1983 movie *Daniel*. As a result, it's *too late* now, when uncomfortable evidence surfaces, for the Rosenbergs suddenly to be dismissed as forgettable. Similarly with Sacco and Vanzetti. It is of no historical importance *per se* if one (or both) of these ancient Italians were guilty or innocent of a robbery and murder in Massachusetts 70 years ago. What keeps the controversy going is that the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti has been used for decades by the left as a *cultural weapon* to lambaste American justice and society as repressive and hypocritical.

But if it turns out that the martyrs (the Rosenbergs, Sacco and Vanzetti, Hiss) might not have been so innocent, then the credibility, the good sense, and even the good faith of the left are called into question. No wonder that John Hess worries about ongoing historical research here, calling it "the new necrophilia"; no wonder he prefers that investigation of these topics—or at least discussion of them—be ended. But when historical incidents affect society and culture as much as *this* history has, then it *is* important to get things right.

And so to the new biography of Lillian Hellman, the original cause of Hess's unhappiness. The facts of Hellman's life, as they emerge from Wright's book, appear to be these. Hellman was the spoiled, brilliant child of an upper-middle-class Jewish family; she had a good education and found easy access to New York literary society in the 20's because of her vivacity and wit; she was the author of potboiling melodramas for the stage, which, despite their controversial worth, nevertheless have remained very popular with the public; she was subject, throughout her life, to violent tantrums if she did not get her way; she never, throughout her life, suffered from serious financial need; indeed, she seems to have lived her life in one long, continuous consumer-frenzy: Cadillacs and limousines, spiffy clothes, gourmet dining, tons of alcohol, and men, men, men.

An enviable life, all in all, and lived intensely (Hellman's most endearing characteristic), but not necessarily a heroic one. The problem is that towards the end of it, in the 1970's, Hellman did begin to portray her life as heroic, and this version of events was accepted as true by a very wide audience.

Two episodes were decisive in creating the Hellman legend of the 70's. In *Pentimento* (1973), the second of her autobiographical memoirs, Hellman revealed that in 1937 she had undertaken the very dangerous job of running money to the anti-Nazi underground in Berlin and that she had provided crucial help to one of the anti-Nazi leaders, her old friend "Julia." Then came *Scoundrel Time* (1976), a riveting account of the circumstances surrounding her appearance in 1952 before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Hellman depicted herself as a fierce defender of civil liberties and the First Amendment, defiantly standing up to the venal and moronic inquisitors of HUAC as they quizzed her about her left-wing past. She stakes out her moral position in a statement that later becomes famous: "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions," i.e., testify against her friends of the left. So impressive is her defiance of the Committee that a spectator is moved to exclaim: "Thank God somebody's finally had the guts to do it!" But her bravery proves costly; she is

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blacklisted. Unable to find work, the great playwright is reduced to becoming a salesgirl at Macy's.

Hellman the heroine, Hellman the martyr. *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time* received wonderful reviews (they are certainly well-written), and they were admirably suited for the mood of post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America. Both books became massive best-sellers (especially *Scoundrel Time*). They reestablished Hellman as a major figure in American letters, after about a decade of quiescence. They won her honorary doctorates from Smith, Columbia, and Yale. They won her a very sympathetic interview from Dan Rather on *60 Minutes* (no probing "investigatory journalism" here!). They won her a triumphant appearance at the Academy Awards of 1977, where Jane Fonda introduced her to a standing ovation, stressing to the national audience Hellman's history of opposition to political oppression. Most of all, the chapter on "Julia" in *Pentimento* was made into a hit movie. It starred Jane Fonda as Hellman (exquisitely appropriate), and Vanessa Redgrave as "Julia" (exquisitely inappropriate). Redgrave won an Academy Award (1978)—this was the speech where she denounced "Zionist thugs." But the crucial thing is that the movie's depiction of Hellman's bravery and self-sacrifice was imprinted on the popular imagination. Movies are very powerful stuff. Fonda-Hellman's heroism is what the American people will remember about the real Lillian, no matter how many articles and books are subsequently published. Hellman took it all in stride, of course. This was the period that saw national magazines running full-page ads of Hellman wrapped in a Blackglamma mink coat (she always loved mink), with no identifying caption except the slogan "What becomes a legend most?"

But doubts about Hellman's legend have grown stronger and stronger—among those who actually care about such things. For those who do care, Wright's biography is worthwhile good reading, and disturbing indeed.

The real debate over Hellman's veracity was kicked off by another media event: on *The Dick Cavett Show* in 1980, Mary McCarthy claimed that "every word Lillian Hellman writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the.'" Despite Hellman's alleged previous stands in favor of the First Amendment, she sued McCarthy, hoping to ruin her financially with lawyers' fees (unlike Hellman, McCarthy wasn't rich) before the case even came to court. Hellman came very near to succeeding in this. But the lawsuit forced McCarthy and others to examine *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time* carefully for the first time. That was a disaster for Hellman. Neither book could take serious scholarly inspection: There was too much that was implausible, impossible, self-contradictory.

The death blow was struck, however, by the publication in 1983 of Muriel Gardiner's memoirs of the prewar anti-Nazi underground. For one thing, it was obvious that Gardiner *was* "Julia": an American student of psychiatry in Vienna who later became a leader of the resistance. There was no one else like her in the movement; no other candidate was possible. And Gardiner said that she had *never* been helped by Hellman, had never even *met* Hellman—nor had anyone else in the resistance network. But, as it turned out, Hellman could have heard of Gardiner: When Gardiner escaped to the U.S. in 1939, her landlord was a friend of Hellman's. In fact, it's very likely that Gardiner had already made one appearance in Hellman's work before *Pentimento*; her history is strikingly like that of the heroine in Hellman's 1941 play, *Watch on the Rhine*. Just as damning was Gardiner's other revelation that the rationale for Hellman's secret mission to Berlin was absurd, because into 1939 it had been perfectly *legal* for foreigners to shift money from outside the Reich into banks in Germany. That was how Gardiner herself had financed the activities of her group, through her Chase Bank branch: a perfectly mundane operation. Gardiner was not very friendly towards Hellman. Hellman, after all, had commandeered her life in order to enhance her own reputation for bravery.

Thus the only thing that seems true about "Julia" is that Hellman did indeed pass briefly through Berlin in 1937. She passed through on her way to Moscow, then in the throes of the Great Purge (which she endorsed), in order to express her support for Stalin and the People's Revolution.

Apparently there is just as little truth to Hellman's dramatic depiction of her defiant appearance before HUAC in 1952 and the devastating impact it had on her life. Here the facts can be very accurately checked. In 1952, she *never* denounced the Committee to its face (though others did). Her famous declaration of conscience was a small part of a polite letter sent to the Committee beforehand; it was never spoken out loud by Hellman to them. At the hearings Hellman, the beneficiary of excellent legal advice, simply took the Fifth Amendment over and over, but also very politely. This strategem placed her in absolute legal safety—which is why so many witnesses before her had done precisely the same thing. So it's hardly surprising that *no one* (except for Hellman) remembers any spectator blurting out "Thank God somebody's finally had the guts to do it!"

Nor is it the case that she suffered dreadfully as a result of failing to cooperate with HUAC. She had been blacklisted (more or less) in Hollywood since 1948; she was never blacklisted on Broadway. On the contrary: Within a few months of her HUAC appearance she was directing a revival of her early play *The Children's Hour*, with an all-star cast and to rave reviews; it was a substantial hit. Indeed, the immediate post-HUAC years saw Hellman productions on Broadway at her usual rate: *The Children's Hour* (1952-53), *The Lark* (1955-56), *Candide* (1956-57), *Toys in the Attic* (early 1960). It was not in the McCarthyite 50's that Hellman disappeared from the New York theater. It was in the liberal 1960's—when she simply ran out of theatrical ideas.

It is true that after her HUAC appearance the IRS began to press Hellman for back taxes. This smacks of a political act; if so, it was abominable behavior on the part of the government. But her problems with the IRS were never bad enough to seriously impede Hellman's ritzy life-style. Throughout this period she not only maintained her beautiful New York townhouse and her famous dinner parties, but from 1954 she *also* took a summerhouse every year on Martha's Vineyard, where she hobnobbed with the *literati* on vacation. (In 1956 she

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bought an estate there.) Not a single witness attests that she ever had to work at Macy's—the very idea is laughable.

Hellman *did* know someone who suffered for his beliefs during the 50's—namely, her longtime friend, lover, and political mentor, Dashiell Hammett. Hammett went to jail in 1951 rather than testify before a grand jury investigating the Communist Party. He was a party member, and one senses that he went to jail (for six months) almost with relish: There is something Orwell-like in Hammett's obsession with integrity, machismo, and masochism. In some ways, in fact, Hammett is the hero of Wright's book. It's clear why Hellman was attracted to him, why for 30 years he was her closest companion (though they both had numerous lovers on the side). Certainly she stuck by him in his last years, especially when he became increasingly sick and difficult to live with. It makes a pretty picture (spoiled by Wright's subsequent revelation that Hellman cheated Hammett's children out of their literary rights under his will, by this means eventually earning herself some $250,000). In any case, perhaps Hellman's deep admiration for Hammett led her to wish that *she* had really done and suffered more in the 50's. The result was the distortions in *Scoundrel Time*.

Hammett was an open and fervent Communist, and the biggest influence on Hellman's life. What, then, were *her* politics? Here we arrive at one of the deepest Hellman mysteries.

Though Wright displays a great deal of sympathy for Hellman, he suggests (with due hesitation) that she was a secret member of the Communist Party until the day she died. That idea has serious consequences. It would mean that while Hellman pretended to be a firmly unaligned and fiercely independent figure of the left, in reality when she spoke on national issues her positions were dictated to her by the party *apparat*. In other words, she was used by the party as a sort of "Judas goat," leading naive and trusting people to the intellectual slaughterhouse. And so useful was this tactic that the party decided her membership must never be revealed.

This is positively sinister. It is also not very likely.

Hellman was certainly no mere liberal, and she was certainly no civil libertarian (despite her self-portrait in *Scoundrel Time*). As Wright says, her anxiety was mainly for the civil liberties of Communists. Moreover, Hellman often did follow the current party line, no matter how nonsensical it was. Hence we find her in 1939-40 fiercely arguing to her friends that mighty, aggressive Finland had attacked the weak and peaceable Soviet Union. A nice touch this, from the person who later claimed to be unable to cut her conscience to fit this year's fashions! Obviously, it depended on who was asking her to do the custom-

REVISIONS

The Poet of Fear

Two worlds there are. One you think You know; the Other is the Well."

—Fred Chappell

Bone-numbing descents; white, overflowing beards sprouting sharks, white whales, and Indian maidens; butchered hogs smiling at the world with baby-blue eyes; yellow-haired strangers in the field confronting little boys with intimations of death—Fred Chappell's planet, sometimes called the South, writhes like a pleat of snakes, copperheads one and all.

The Fred Chappell Reader (New York: St. Martin's Press; $22.95) has been put together by scholars (which may explain the inclusion of the complete text of *Dagon* as Chappell's "best" novel), but Fred Chappell is too good a writer to be hurt by such an error. "Suffering is the most expensive of human feelings," writes Chappell, "and suffering is simply one means of carving a design upon an area of time, of charging with human meaning each separate moment." The young North Carolinian who wrote that knew things beyond his years, and possibly his experience. This was not lost on the Académie Française that awarded Chappell the Best Foreign Novel Prize for *Dagon*. Chappell, the American connoisseur and admirer of Rimbaud was lauded and feted—one of the worst things that can happen to a young writer (that is how "men of letters" are created).

In *The Storytellers*, from his recent book *I Am One of You Forever*, Chappell writes, "It occurred to me that my father was preoccupied with the problem of Homer's blindness. Homer had lived in history and told his stories about real soldiers and described in grisly detail battles he could not have seen. But, like Uncle Zeno, Homer had left no trace in the world. Patient scholars were forced to debate whether the poet had ever actually lived. . . . What if Uncle Zeno's stories so thoroughly absorbed the characters he spoke of that they took leave of everyday world and just went off to inhabit one of his narratives? Everything connected with them would disappear, they would leave no more sign among us than a hawk's shadow leaves in the snow he flies above. The only place you could find Achilles these days was in the *Illiad*. Had he ever existed otherwise?"

Fred Chappell is a poet, and, like Rimbaud, he sings of the world he has yet to see with Homer's blind accuracy. Yet, poets are often a young breed (Homer must have been young even with white hair), and Chappell's world is caught in the amber of childhood—gossamer, wondrous, and fearfully immediate.

Smiling, stroking a black cat, Fred Chappell looks at us from the dust jacket of his *Reader*. We just may hope that he lives long and does not suffer overmuch in his latter years. We need the delight of his worlds brought gleaming up from descents and depths, by the jeweled, miraculous web of his words. (MS)

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tailoring. There is also no question that despite all the bourgeois perks she always enjoyed, Hellman saw American society as basically evil, while Soviet society could do no wrong. Thus when Budd Schulberg complained to her of Soviet oppression of writers, Hellman screamed at him "Prove it! Prove it!"; this happened sometime around 1968.

But Hellman also wrote her anti-Nazi play, *Watch on the Rhine*, during the period of the Hitler-Stalin Pact —not something a person under party discipline would do. And if she was a Stalinist (and she was), the weird fact is that she *remained* a Stalinist long after the Communist Party, under Khrushchev's lead, had *denounced* Stalin. In fact, Hellman blamed Khrushchev for "stabbing Stalin in the back"(!), and it was only in 1976 (in *Scoundrel Time*) that she made even the briefest, most grudging admission that Stalin might have "sinned." *This* was the person Jane Fonda introduced in 1977 as a "fighter against political oppression"! Nevertheless, it was a deadly deviation from the party line for Hellman to continue to support Stalin after the party had proclaimed him a criminal with the blood of millions on his hands. A loyal member of the party wouldn't (and couldn't) do it. Moreover, the actual witnesses to her presence in the party are few, and not very impressive (even, it seems, to the FBI). And some of their testimony has been contradicted just since the publication of Wright's book.

So: ethically unbalanced, yes; a fellow traveler, often; but a conscience totally controlled by the party, probably not. (Too bad: Maybe the party would have done a better job.) If she was "somebody's girl" (Wright's phrase), it's more likely that she was Hammett's (that old charming Stalinist), not the party's. But the *most* likely explanation, I think, is that she was her own weird girl all along: She always insisted that she was not a deep political thinker. As a close friend said about her politics, "With Lillian, don't rule out idiocy."

Whatever she was, though, Hellman established herself in the 1970's as a unique American heroine. By means of powerful publicity in the press, she was held up to be admired not just by the left but also by the entire country. It is particularly disturbing that the basis for admiration was supposed to be, precisely, her politics. But Wright's book appears to confirm what has long been suspected: that Hellman's famous memoirs are a tissue of lies. And her *cultural* importance is now so great, thanks to her apotheosis in the 70's, that the true story must not be brushed under the rug—despite the wishes of John Hess of *The Nation*.

Why did she lie? In the current state of our information, we can only guess. Wright sympathetically suggests that in her old age she became persistently delusional. That is, Hellman didn't "lie" in the real sense of "consciously deceive," because she *herself* could no longer tell the facts of her life from her fantasies of it. This amounts to saying that in her last years, when she was most honored, Hellman was actually crazy. It's an amusing image. In favor of the idea is that she did sue Mary McCarthy for slander, a dangerous procedure if she knew McCarthy was mostly right. (But she may have thought she could destroy McCarthy before the case ever came to court.) *Against* the idea are Hellman's frantic attempts to prevent Wright, or any "unauthorized person," from seriously researching her life. Why did she seek such total control of information if she thought she had nothing to be afraid of? Anyway, her attempts to talk to Muriel Gardiner about the Mary McCarthy case (which fell through) certainly indicate that she knew a hard reality when she saw it.

Moreover, Hellman's behavior needs to be put in a wider context. This is a failing of Wright's book throughout; but here, the point is that in the 1970's Hellman was not the *only* old Stalinoid intellectual to be purveying false information about the past, especially past personal conduct. Malcolm Cowley did the same, to cheering college audiences. Did he, too, suffer from delusions? Or was it that he simply thought he could get away with it? Lillian Hellman did get away with it, for almost 10 years.

So: We just don't know the real story of Hellman's inner life yet. Wright utterly demolishes Hellman's public *persona*, but the private Hellman, the real Hellman, remains to be discovered. The mystery can only be solved by complete access to her private papers, and that's not likely to happen anytime soon.

But there is a far more important (and final) question: not "Why did Lillian lie?" but "Why were *we* so ready to *believe* her?"

There is a sense in which Hellman was victimized by her radical past both in the 50's *and* in the 70's. In the McCarthyite 50's, it resulted in some mild persecution; in the revisionist 70's, it resulted in her virtual deification. Neither process had much to do with the real Lillian (a fierce little person of clearly minor importance); she was caught up both times in broader social and cultural movements. For if the New Left of the 1960's was overtly contemptuous of the rigid old Stalinists, the leftist intellectual consensus of the 1970's had a weakness for them, seeing them as a flawed but parental generation, and perhaps even as heroes. That process is still at work: Witness the whitewash of party history in the current movie *Seeing Red* (protested now even by the radical historian Jesse Lemisch). The deification of Lillian Hellman was part of that process. But Orwell wrote that the great sin of leftist intellectuals in the 30's was their desire to be anti-Fascist without being antitotalitarian, and the description fits Lillian Hellman like a glove. We should not have been so eager to accept her at face value. By "we," I mean all of us who were not out-and-out conservatives. But it's the left's special responsibility: They pushed her. Until the left comes to grips with the totalitarian part of its past and firmly rejects it instead of glorifying it, there is little chance of its becoming a viable political movement in this country. Moreover, the left's unwillingness to totally reject the totalitarian past is part of a far more serious problem: its continued violent apologetics for any totalitarianism of the *present* (Vietnamese, Cuban, Nicaraguan) that calls itself by the "correct" name of "Marxist." In any case, the apotheosis of Lillian Hellman is now one of the innumerable skeletons in the left's closet. John Hess's desire to push the issue aside, which was the starting point of this essay, only compounds the moral problem faced by the left—a moral problem we might well call "Hellmanism."

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Protestant Polities, Religion, and American Public Life *by Mark Noll*

"Every sect is a moral check on its neighbor. Competition is as wholesome in religion as in commerce."
—Walter Savage Landor

Unsecular America, edited by Richard John Neuhaus, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; $8.95.

Less Than Conquerors: How Evangelicals Entered the Twentieth Century by Douglas W. Frank, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; $14.95.

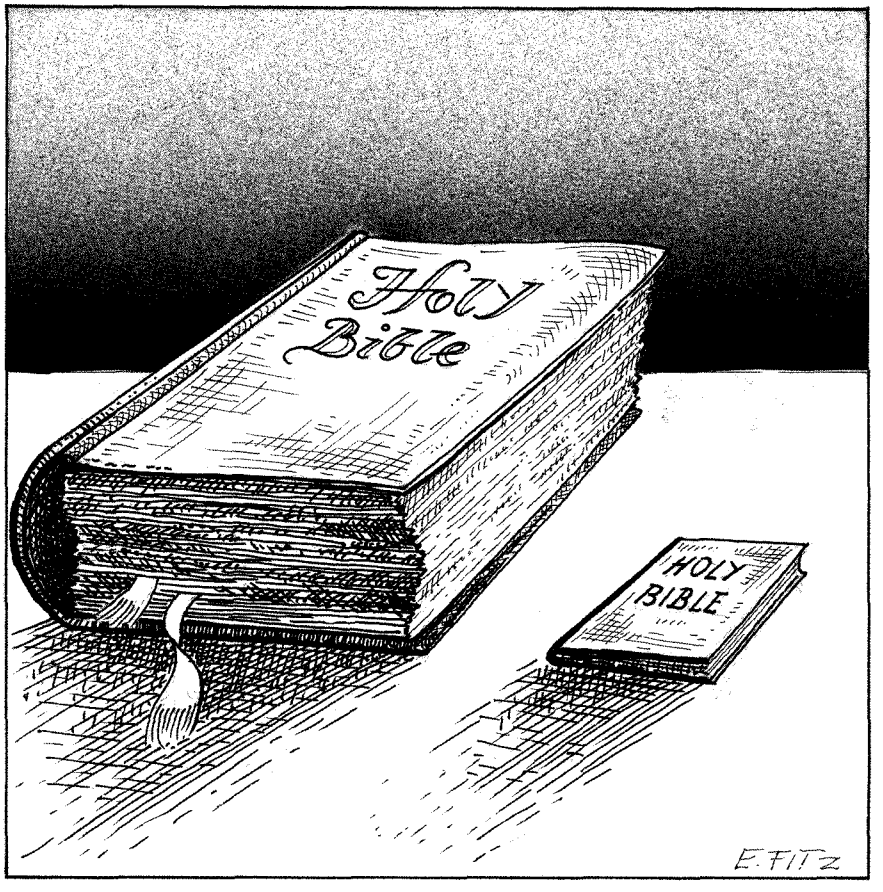
When English Protestants fled their native land during Mary's reign, many of them ended up in John Calvin's Geneva. Additional refugees found a home in other Reformed cities in southwestern Germany. Lutheran lands, by contrast, were far less hospitable to these English Protestants. Internal theological strife following the death of Martin Luther in 1546, as well as political and military reverses in the struggle against the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, had left the Lutherans shaken and divided. They probably could not have offered asylum to the English, even had they wanted to.

When the refugees returned to England at the start of Elizabeth's reign, they brought back positive impressions of the Reformed cities. John Knox, the Scottish reformer who had earlier contributed to Protestant efforts in England, said of Calvin's Geneva that it was "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles." Other Britons did not express their enthusiasm so extravagantly, but the warm welcome they had received from European Calvinists certainly influenced their own attitudes. As a result, the more advanced or "thorough" English Protestants strove for the same sort of reforms in England they had witnessed on the Continent. At least for these more self-conscious Protestants, England's earlier theological eclecticism gave way to patterns more consistently Reformed.

The long-term ramifications of this historical episode have been immense. Reformed models from the Continent inspired the English Puritans in their struggle to carry out a further reformation of England and her church. These same Reformed models were also exported to the New World by the Puritans who founded Massachusetts and Connecticut and also exerted a compelling influence elsewhere in the American colonies. Their presence has loomed large in the whole course of American civilization. This explains why Lutheranism, which was the first Protestantism, has had little influence on the Protestant civilization of the United States.

On narrow theological grounds, this means little. The long history of Lutheran-Calvinist controversy has concerned details. In the universe of possible theologies, Luther and Calvin stand quite close to each other. Both drew heavily upon Augustine, both stressed the debilities of sinful human nature, both exalted the power of God and the work of Christ as central for human salvation, and both read the Bible as a book of God's promises to rescue an undeserving humanity. It was not theology that separated the Lutherans and the Reformed as much as culture.

But on cultural matters, the differences were large and important. However much attention Luther gave to holiness of life, the center of his thought remained the redeeming cross of Christ. However much Calvin preached the cross, his message constantly returned to sanctified living.



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On the level of polity, these differences in tone and tendency became much more important. Luther was relatively indifferent to questions of church order because he knew how easily ecclesiastical propriety became spiritual pride. Calvin acknowledged the same reality, yet poured great energies into creating a truly godly church. Luther counseled restraint in politics. It was better to suffer injustice from the state than to allow passion for political reform to obscure the desperate condition of every human (ruler or ruled, tyrant or reformer) before the righteousness of God. Calvin never abandoned the centrality of Jesus (it was Calvin who popularized the picture of Christ as prophet, priest, and king). But the reform of politics was an activity that Christians, grateful to God for the gift of salvation, should pursue as part of the drive for holiness.

For American culture, it has made all the difference that Reformed rather than Lutheran attitudes have prevailed. In each of the three significant periods of American history—the colonial under the influence of the Puritans, the national under a more generally evangelical influence, and the modern under the sway of the secular —Reformed or Calvinistic patterns of culture formation have been the rule. Like the early leaders of Calvinism on the Continent and the English Puritans, Americans have moved in a straight line from personal belief to social reform, from passion for God and the Bible (or later, science and technique) to passion for the renovation of society, from private experience to political activity. With only infrequent exceptions, like Nathaniel Hawthorne in the 19th century and Reinhold Niebuhr in the 20th, there has been no "Lutheran irony" in America, no sense that precisely in our most valiant public efforts *for* God we run the risk of substituting *our* righteousness for the righteousness of Christ that arises only by faith, independently of works.

Reformed attitudes toward life in the world have had an immense effect on American history. Calvinistic convictions about living all of life for the glory of God led to the remarkable experiment of 17th-century New England where Puritans created the freest, most stable, most democratic society then existing on earth. In the 18th century the Puritan passion for public justice provided, if not the specific ideology, at least much of the energy for the American Revolution and the creation of a new nation. During the 19th century, Protestantism fueled immense labors of Christianization and civilization—subduing a continent, democratizing a people, evangelizing at home through revival and abroad through missions, reforming institutions, attitudes, habits, and social practices, and surviving a civil war that ended with the prohibition of slavery.

The encroachments of secularism on this Reformed legacy have changed the substance but not the form of public activity. When Science replaced Scripture and Progress elbowed God aside, the goals remained the same—all of life must still be reformed. Only the agency was different. It might be Education, opened to all as a means for solving the nation's problems. It might be Science and Know-How—the Form and Demiurge of modernity. Most typically, the new god has been government. With Democrats who favored social legislation or Republicans who favored defense, only bigger was better. While modern Americans may differ in nearly every particular from their Puritan and evangelical ancestors, they still are deeply committed to working out their salvation, and the salvation of everyone else, through the control of public life.

It has been encouraging recently to see increasingly serious discussion of Reformed patterns of political involvement in contemporary America. The discussion needs to be sophisticated because the phenomenon is complex. Now at work in the "public square" are several groups whose purposes overlap and clash at a number of points. There are Christians who seek self-consciously to recapture earlier patterns of religious influence; anti- or a-religious people who want to order public life by "enlightened," scientific, or secular goals; religious people (sometimes Protestant, but more often Catholic, Jewish, or members of other faiths) who want morality in public life but not traditional American Protestantism; and, drawn from each of the above groups, significant numbers who take seriously the reality of America's religious, moral, and political pluralism.

Prominent in this recent discussion has been Pastor Richard Neuhaus, who has not only popularized a telling phrase with the title of his book, *The Naked Public Square*, but who also has done much to disentangle the knotty issues involved—through that book, through other writings, and through his direction of The Rockford Institute's Center on Religion & Society in New York. Now as part of the work of the Center, Eerdmans has begun to publish Neuhaus' "Encounter Series," which besides *Unsecular America* also includes *Virtue: Public and Private* and *Confession, Conflict, and Community*.

The format of these books is the same. Neuhaus enlists several scholars to present papers on a central theme before a larger group of individuals who have some expertise in the subject. A day or two of discussion takes place over these papers. Neuhaus and his assistant, the Rev. Paul Stallsworth, then edit the papers, summarize, abridge, organize, and otherwise clean up a transcript of the discussion, and the whole is published.

Those who might have doubts about the format can rest easy. If *Unsecular America* is any indication, the process works. In this book the papers are stimulating: the English journalist Paul Johnson on the contribution of religion to America's self-identity; Everett Carll Ladd of the Roper Center on what public polling tells us about the religious beliefs of modern Americans; George Marsden of Duke University asking the questions "Are Secularists the Threat? Is Religion the Solution?"; and Neuhaus himself on the critical role of religion for redefining the meaning of modern America.

Papers by Marsden and Neuhaus amount to point and counterpoint. The authors do agree that a modern secularity which ignores or despises religion harms society and betrays essential human nature. Marsden, however, questions the notion that a well-organized conspiracy of secular humanists has been orchestrating America's recent history. He also wants proponents of religion in public life to reassure secularists and other ideological minorities that past American excesses in imposing explicitly Christian beliefs and practices will not be

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repeated in the modern effort to bring religious reasoning to bear on public problems. Neuhaus, while acknowledging the problems Marsden describes, is more concerned to drive home his twofold thesis: Holders of traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs have every right to a civil expression of their views in public; modern secularists have no right to make the public square off limits for religiously inspired contributions.

In nearly 50 pages of discussion, commentators like Peter Berger, Steven Tipton (coauthor of *Habits of the Heart*), Edward Dobson of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, and Theodore Caplow (a sociologist from the University of Virginia who has been heading up the Middletown III study of religion in Muncie, Indiana) enrich and expand the concerns of the papers. Although the discussion covers a multitude of topics, it keeps returning to the need for moral and religious undergirding for the public philosophy of a successful democracy. The participants disagree, and disagree in very interesting ways, on many of the subissues involved. Yet each of the papers, and almost every paragraph of the published commentary, contributes significantly to a better understanding of the perils that attend the application of religion to public life, the restraints that must be exercised when making such an application, but also the desperate need in the current situation for making such an effort.

As thoroughly as the participants at the Neuhaus conference on "unsecular America" explore and refine Reformed approaches to American life, there is also an occasional "Lutheran" note as well. George Marsden at one point in the discussion, for example, ventured the opinion that "Sometimes the way that secularization advances is by the advance of religion. That is . . . there is a baptizing of worldly practice. From the perspective of traditional Christianity, the advance of religion might be a dangerous thing, and that would include civil religion." Such comments remained unexplored at the conference, but they do raise the interesting question as to what a *thoroughly* Lutheran approach to religion in public life would look like. This, as it happens, is exactly what Douglas Frank has attempted in *Less Than Conquerors*.

Eerdmans is marketing this volume as a history book, but it could just as easily be sold as a biblical exposition or, if the category still existed, as a jeremiad. Frank too is interested in religion and the public square. But unlike most American commentators on the subject, past and present, his chief concern is religion. He is asking Luther's sort of question: What happens to *religion* precisely at that point where the best, noblest, and most heroic attempts are made to shape a culture with Christian precepts?

Frank's narrative thread is the story of American Protestant evangelicals from the mid-19th century to the present. Evangelicals dominated American life from the time of the Civil War until a host of forces—industrialization, urbanization, and the creation of a mass marketing economy—and ideas—from Darwin, Freud, and other post-Christians—created confusion in a once predictable society and "stole" American culture from the evangelicals. In response, evangelicals developed a series of compensating strategies to regain control of inner and outer worlds. Theologically, evangelicals turned to dispensationalism, a way of reading the Bible that emphasized neat, rationalistic, tightly organized interpretations of prophecy and its fulfillment. In Frank's view, this was a system that allowed evangelicals "to bring history back under their control." Spiritually, evangelicals nourished several varieties of perfectionist "Victorious Living." The forces of evil might control the public realm, but through strenuous effort and self-discipline evangelicals could approach spiritual perfection in "the inner man." Publicly, evangelicals turned to the revival as the surest means to win back America for Christ and, coincidentally, for the evangelicals.

By the mid-1920's it became clear even to evangelical leaders that revivalism had not recaptured America. Yet conservative evangelicals, now called fundamentalists, did not abandon dispensational theology, Victorious Living, or revivalism. Rather these became the foundations for an alternative culture-in-exile, biding time as secret servants of the Lord until the End would come or, perhaps, until the times would change and the good guys might reemerge on top once again. And so, it seems, it has come to pass. Beginning in the mid-1970's, the coinage of late-19th-century evangelicalism is circulating with renewed vigor in the American political economy. There is a new receptivity to the old faith. And again it seems—academic obituaries on the demise of religion in the modern world notwithstanding—that evangelicals might actually regain partial control of America.

Frank, who grew up in a fundamentalist parsonage, has a firm grasp on the relevant historical literature, both on narrow religious matters and more general American developments. The remarkable, even stunning power of this book, however, lies not in the story it tells, but in Frank's interpretation. At every point he stands the conventional evangelical discourse on its head. Cultural domination, "calling the shots," is not a good thing but a spiritual disaster. Power leads to idolatry and the absence of God. Cultural disorientation and weakness opens the way to the holy. The standard aspirations of American evangelicals to power and influence signal the end of the Christian gospel. The fatal turn, as Frank sees it, came early in the history of the United States when evangelicals compromised the gospel by using the Christian message as a means to promote themselves. In so doing, they perpetrated "the serious confusion of Jesus Christ and American culture."

In making these charges, Frank takes great pains to define what he means by the gospel. Passages from Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the Apostle Paul drive home his point that the biblical God asks for brokenness instead of power, weakness instead of self-sufficiency, despair instead of confidence. This biblical exposition is at its best on the book of Job, which Frank uses to indict the effort to predicate godliness upon wealth and influence.

The end of the 19th century emerges as the great lost moment in the history of the evangelicals. The theological conservatives had become disoriented from their failure to control the public square. Now, perhaps of all times, they were in the best position to hear the good news of the gospel

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—that God saves the weak, that God rescues those who moan for the burden of their sins, that the Christian God helps only those who have stopped trying to help themselves. Alas, it was not to be, and evangelicals turned once again to power or its substitutes.

Less Than Conquerors is a disturbing and powerful book, nowhere more moving than when describing the continued evangelical propensity to pursue control. Frank suggests that by seeking to transform American life into their version of the Good—by following the pattern of Reformed public involvement—evangelicals, whatever secondary benefit they may have bequeathed to the republic, have forsaken the cross and compromised the Christian message.

Yet Frank is not calling for separation from the world. Too clearly does he know, in Solzhenitsyn's memorable phrase, that the final line between good and evil runs not between individuals but within them. Rather he calls for the renewal of a religion that has been corrupted by its best intentions and the memory of its greatest triumphs. Not since Joseph Haroutunian's history of theology in 18th-century New England, *Piety Versus Moralism* (1932), has there appeared such a forceful Christian analysis of an American Christian tradition.

Non-Christians may scratch their heads in bewilderment. At least with Neuhaus and his collaborators there is a recognized vocabulary and a comfortable set of assumptions. The American Way can almost be equated with the effort (no matter where it comes from on or off the religious spectrum) to build a civilization by the application of moral principle (no matter how loosely "moral" may be defined). The contributors to *Unsecular America* stand squarely in that tradition as they try to apply sounder moral principles in a sounder manner in order to increase the soundness of the republic. Frank, on the other hand, seems to be speaking an unknown tongue.

Christians, and perhaps some others, may yet hope that the messages of *Unsecular America* and *Less Than Conquerors* are not simply irrelevant or antithetical to each other. If the ultimate goal of a Reformed approach to culture really were the glory of God, as in principle it was for Calvin, and if the Lutheran message of the cross did not rule out public concern for the good of others, as in practice it did not for Luther, then it is at least conceivable that believers in the cross might act altruistically in public and that the Protestant Reformation might be reunited in these latter days of America's history.

The Hammer of Hunger *by Charles A. Moser*

"Every scarecrow secretly desires to terrorize."
—Stanislaw Lec

The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine **by Robert Conquest, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press; $19.95.**

When, from time to time, a responsible official in the United States suggests we employ our abundance of food as a "weapon" in our struggle with Communist totalitarianism, a clamor of protest arises from one end of the country to the other. But when the Communists wield food—or its lack—as a lethal instrument, then the West organizes entertainment extravaganzas to assist them. Skillfully exploiting the humane instincts of decent people abroad, Communist governments are using them to support cynically brutal wars upon their own citizens at home.

The Harvest of Sorrow is a detailed investigation of one of the most horrendous and least-known crimes of a Communist regime—Stalin's war against two major internal groups which he viewed as a threat: the peasants and the Ukrainian nation. With meticulous care, extensive historical sources, and the best available statistics, Professor Conquest has etched a horrifying picture of Soviet government's genocide against its own people in the 1920's and 30's.

Conquest tells his story of the "terror-famine" against an appropriate historical background. He points out that the Communist Party was extraordinarily weak among the vast peasant majority in prerevolutionary Russia—before 1917 there were fewer than 500 Bolshevik peasants in the entire country. Although Lenin established what he called a workers' and peasants' government, the peasants instinctively understood his urban dictatorship meant them no good. During the civil war (1918-1922) the Communists faced peasant rebellions which were so extensive that in the spring of 1921 Lenin privately admitted his party's grip on power was extremely tenuous. Although the Bolsheviks emerged finally victorious militarily, the political and economic pressures remained so great that Lenin had to take "one step backwards" and introduce the so-called New Economic Policy (NEP). This "tactical move" permitted a considerable degree of private enterprise, especially in the countryside, giving the peasantry a breathing space for a few years in the 1920's.

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin consolidated his power by moving against the *kulaks*, or wealthy peasants, as a class. But his genuine intent was to eliminate the peasantry itself by destroying its political and economic consciousness. This policy began in early 1930 with "class warfare" against the *kulaks* in the villages, followed by forced collectivization, designed to liquidate private property in land and thus bring the rural population under the direct control of the party. The campaign succeeded, but at such an economic and human cost that in March of 1930 even Stalin beat a temporary retreat on the issue.

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This brief respite was only another tactical maneuver, however, and the Soviet regime soon returned to the assault on its own people. Justifying his actions with the argument that the peasantry would deprive the State of food if only it could, Stalin felt entitled to use the same weapon and starve the peasantry into submission first. This campaign, which reached its peak in the terror-famine of 1932 and the early part of 1933, was directed not only against the farmers but also against the rebellious Ukrainians, who for years fought for self-determination within the Russian Empire. The famine was centered in the fertile Ukraine; that it was imposed deliberately may be seen from the fact that stored grain in the region was not released to the peasants; also, the peasants were forcibly prevented from entering the cities, where small bread rations existed, and from crossing into the Russian Republic, where there was no hunger. All that while the Soviet authorities officially denied there was any starvation in the afflicted areas.

The evidence Conquest presents, then, makes an overwhelming case for believing that Stalin consciously used famine as a weapon for a mass destruction of what he considered a class enemy. Using the best statistics available to him, Conquest concludes that some 14.5 million people either died in 1930-37 of unnatural causes or were sent to camps where they perished not much later. Of these, about 6.5 million died during the anti-*kulak* campaign, and about seven million during the famine of 1932-33. We should keep these figures in mind when we are told, as we so often are, that the Soviets would never want another war because they lost 20 million people in their conflict against Hitler.

Statistics lack the human appeal which case histories can provide, and *Harvest of Sorrow* quotes many witnesses to the human suffering in this holocaust. In fact, a famine of this sort is even worse than a war. Conquest cites a "former activist" as saying:

> On a battlefield men die quickly, they fight back, they are sustained by fellowship and a sense of duty. Here I saw people dying in solitude by slow degrees, dying hideously, without the excuse of sacrifice for a cause. They had been trapped and left to starve, each in his home, by a political decision made in a far-off capital around conference and banquet tables.

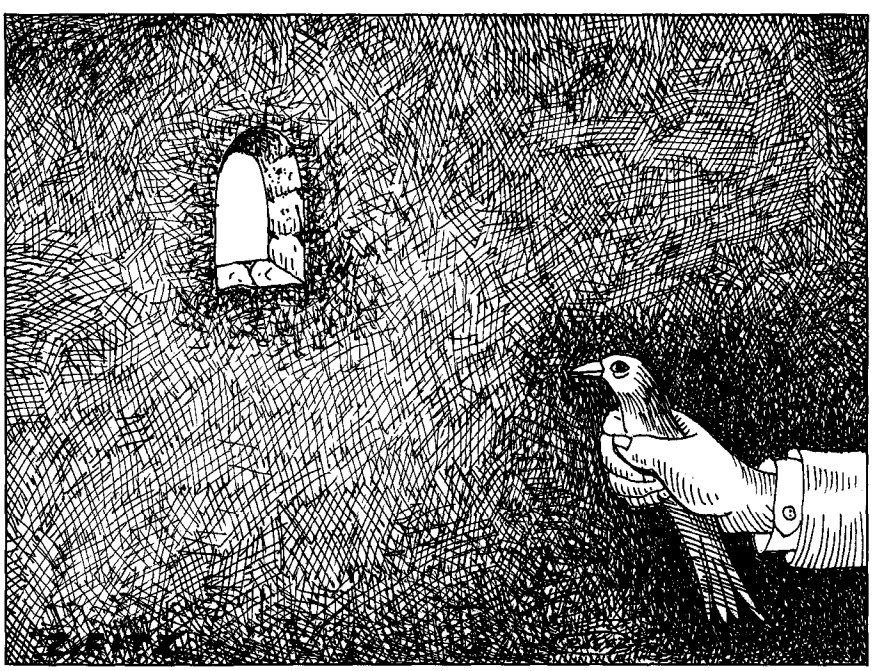
So great was the misery of the victims of this frightful extermination that some were driven to cannibalism:

> One activist who had been working on the collectivization campaign in Siberia came back to the Ukraine in 1933 to find the population of his village "almost extinct." His younger brother told him that they were living on bark, grass, and hares, but that when these gave out, "Mother says we should eat her if she dies."

Is it possible that a tragedy of such mammoth dimensions could have occurred without the knowledge of the outside world? In a certain sense it is, for "credible" Western observers visited the area and then joined Soviet officialdom in denying there was any widespread starvation in the Ukraine. Some, like Edouard Herriot, were perhaps deceived by skillful manipulation; others, like Sir John Maynard and Beatrice and Sydney Webb, deceived themselves; while *New York Times* correspondent Walter Duranty consciously lied to his readers (in 1932 he received a Pulitzer Prize for "dispassionate, interpretive reporting of the news from Russia"). Such was the power of this deception that it has taken almost half a century for the truth to emerge and be generally, if reluctantly, accepted.

And yet even those who perhaps will admit Stalin used famine as a weapon in 1932-33 find it difficult to accept the notion that this may be a standard instrument in the arsenal of Communist regimes. To the objective eye the record is indisputable. We need only recall the Cambodian holocaust of a decade ago, when famine helped decimate a proud people; in Afghanistan, now, the Soviet invaders are intentionally destroying crops and livestock and moving populations to areas where there is little food; in Ethiopia today similar things are going on—yet when we hear of foodstocks sent by the West rotting on Ethiopian docks, we find it hard to believe this could be government policy instead of mere inefficiency. In *Against All Hope*, his horrifying memoir of his imprisonment in Castro's Cuba, Armando Valladares reports on hunger as a device used to break down Cuban prisoners' resistance.

Despite all these witnesses, it still seems difficult today for normal people of goodwill to believe the Communists are using famine as a lethal weapon. Half a century ago, it was even more difficult. At that time, Conquest points



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out, there were those who told the truth about the terror-famine in the Ukraine: Malcolm Muggeridge, Eugene Lyons, William Henry Chamberlain, Gareth Jones. But their evidence was widely rejected because it was too unsettling. There were also those inevitable countervailing observers who said things people were much more willing to accept.

It may be that the vast majority of human beings everywhere cannot believe such horrors exist until they themselves actually experience them. If one day—God forbid—we should encounter such disasters in this land of plenty, we cannot say we were not warned repeatedly and eloquently. Robert Conquest is one of those who has strived most energetically to speak to those with ears to hear.

Mother's Darling

by Katherine Dalton

***Enchantment* by Daphne Merkin, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $16.95.**

Hannah Lehmann is one of six children in a wealthy, New York, Orthodox Jewish family headed by a somewhat caustic, undemonstrative mother and a father whose concern is business. Hannah is obsessed with her mother, who never loved her enough, but whom Hannah cannot leave, forgive, or stop thinking about. Years, lovers, and psychiatrists do not help her. "My mother is the source of my unease in the world," Hannah says, "and thus the only person who can make me feel at home in the world." Though it is all her mother's fault, Hannah feels she is nothing without her.

"Somewhere in this story," writes Daphne Merkin at the beginning of her novel *Enchantment*, "is a tragedy, but it is very hard to see." Too hard; for a novelist who has put her character's mind—or perhaps her own—under a microscope, the tragedy is buried so deep that the rest of us have to wonder if it's really there at all.

Merkin has taken her title from Plato—"Everything that deceives may be said to enchant"—but it is Aristotle she should be rereading. "A tragedy is impossible without action," he wrote, and the essential plot has three essential elements to it: a reversal of circumstances, a change from ignorance to knowledge, and suffering.

Enchantment has only suffering—a long, articulate whine. If it's clear that life is genuinely painful for Hannah, it doesn't keep her from being endlessly irritating. I say articulate because Merkin writes well and with apparent care. There are some metaphors and thoughts that are quite lovely: "The only part of Sunday that I like is the morning; past twelve o'clock I begin to hate the day, the way in which it sags," or, "I don't suppose I'll ever use any of these items, but their arrival in the mail, packed in auspicious brown cartons, made me feel momentarily less lonely, at the end of someone else's thoughts."

But they cannot save the book. Merkin may have some gifts for observation, but she has none for plot. It may be she has abandoned plot altogether; this book is remarkable for its utter lack of it. Absolutely nothing happens; instead, Merkin has put all her eggs into one basket—character—and it's Hannah's character that must hold the reader to the book. There's nothing else, no beginning or end, no character development or progression in thinking, nor regression, even.

Merkin has very believably drawn Hannah, in monumental detail, right down to her theories about her bodily functions—revelations I could have done without. (You have to be an exceedingly good writer to overcome the gratuitous coarseness of writing about going to the bathroom.) To have created Hannah is something. For an actor, whose job is characterization, it would be everything. For a novelist, it's not nearly enough. The author has to make you want to finish the book, not just believe it. I couldn't get away from the feeling that *Enchantment* could as easily have been half as long or twice as long. When something has no beginning or end, what is it that puts boundaries around the middle? Whim? Fatigue? An editor who says, any longer and we'll have to raise the price to $18.95? I know no more, really, about Hannah by chapter 18 than I did after chapter 2; aside from some nice lines, I'd gained no more insight into Hannah or the world or anything else, and I hadn't been particularly entertained; surely we make the effort to read a book for one of those reasons?

A novel in which nothing happens must have a main character capable of taking center stage and holding it—in this case, 288 pages worth. But Merkin has painfully painted herself into a corner by creating a character who is complete but unsympathetic. The focus of a book has to have some strong allure, even if it's mostly demonic; Hannah I just want to shake some sense into. Past and present mingle into one great extended monologue always in the present tense. I grew desperate for any kind of action at all, anything, just not another hundred pages of lengthy ruminations on the Hannah Lehmann self.

Some of my friends liked the book better than I did. "She's peeled herself like an onion," said one who liked the book precisely for the completeness and shamelessness of Hannah's self-exposure. For me it felt like a vicarious, decade-long therapy session, and I've never been much of a fan of psychoanalysis. Merkin chronicles the details of Hannah's life indiscriminately, moving in ever smaller concentric circles, like some poor parody of Dante's hierarchy in Hell, from the petty details to the pettiest. Details are vital to any book, of course. But not every single detail that can be gleaned from scrutinizing your apartment and from thinking back over your friends' and family's lives and your own 20-odd years of experience. Merkin is guilty of the novelist's equivalent of relativism: anything—a squeezed-out tube of toothpaste, just anything—is as good as anything else, and everything is chronicled and included.

So in *Enchantment* you have every bit you'd ever want to know about an upper-class Jewish girl too weak to be evil, too self-involved and petulant to be much good. If there is one thing that made me pause when I was finishing *Enchantment*, it's what this exhaustive portrait means. All novels are to some extent autobiographical, in that writers must put something of their own lives, experiences, or observations into them, and first novels (which *Enchantment* is) are notoriously so. But any book with this precise a picture of one needlessly broken per-

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sonality almost certainly has to come, and to a frightening extent, from its author's own life. In the end, what is haunting about *Enchantment* is that you can't seem to separate the dancer from the dance.

Katherine Dalton writes from New York.

Tales Out of School

The Big Book of Home Learning **by Mary Pride, Westchester, IL: Crossway Books; $17.50.**

For many people, education comes down to a choice between the unaffordable and the unacceptable. Home schooling is increasingly the answer for a great many beleaguered families who cannot find (or cannot pay for) private education. There are many obstacles to home schooling, but the first hurdle is probably the worst: where to begin? There is a wide variety of packaged systems and text materials, and it is difficult for the nonprofessional to make an intelligent choice. Mary Pride has made that first hurdle a great deal easier by providing a detailed and clearly written description of what's available, what it costs, and what it's supposed to do. Even parents who are content with the public or private schools to which they have dedicated their children's future will want to have this book available as an invaluable guide to educational resources. (Did you know, for example, that you can purchase a K-6 lab-science program for $85-$150 per grade or hardbound children's classics for under $4?) In the slough of books produced by evangelical publishers every year, this wonderfully useful book stands out. (TF)

Resisting in Berlin

by Howard Sitton

Berlin Diaries, 1940-1945 **by Marie Vassiltchikov, New York: Alfred A. Knopf; $19.95.**

"The (anti-Hitler) conspiracy failed," wrote the late Willi Schlamm, himself a refugee from Nazism, nearly 30 years ago. "But the list of names of those whom a maddened Hitler hanged after the failure reads like a *Gotha* of Germany's famous military families. . . . They are names which, if the truth indeed prevails, will join the short list of superior men who have not hesitated to choose their God over their race."

What was life like for these men in the besieged enemy capital? A young Russian émigré named Marie (Missie) Vassiltchikov, who worked for the German Foreign Office, kept a diary which tells us.

Missie's life in Berlin began well enough. In spite of somewhat straitened circumstances, the first two years of war weren't too bad. The bombing raids were numerous but caused more discomfort than dislocation.

By the end of 1943, the situation had changed markedly. Continually subjected to heavy bombing, Berlin was a shambles. Only major exertions by its inhabitants kept a patchwork civil structure functioning amid collapsing buildings, never-ending fires, and shortages of food and manpower. That this effort was made not in spite of but because of the bombing is noted:

> (22 December 1943) It looks as if these ghastly raids are intended to help by breaking the Germans' morale, but I do not think that much can be achieved that way. Indeed they are having the contrary effect. For amidst such suffering and hardship . . . everyone seems intent only on patching roofs, propping up walls, cooking on an upturned electric iron, or melting snow to wash with. . . . The heroic side of human nature takes over and people are extraordinarily friendly and helpful.

As the plot comes together, the diary entries become more urgent:

> (24 April 1944) Had a long talk with Loremarie Schoenburg. It is difficult for me to tell her that . . . her presence in Berlin endangers people who are far more involved in what is to come.

. . . and plaintive:

> (16 June 1944) I often feel ashamed and frustrated at not being more deeply involved in something really worthwhile, but what can I, a foreigner, do?

. . . and telling:

> (19 July 1944) The truth is that there is a fundamental difference in outlook between all of them and me: not being German, I am concerned only with the elimination of the Devil. . . . Being patriots, they want to save their country from complete destruction by setting up some interim government. I have never believed that . . . would be acceptable to the Allies, who refuse to distinguish between "good" Germans and "bad." This, of course, is a fatal mistake on their part and we will probably all pay a heavy price for it.

When the plot failed, the Nazis were furious, and the arrests began. The pressure quickly became too great, and many famous Germans (including

commanders like Rommel and von Kluge) chose suicide rather than face Gestapo "trial" and torture. It soon became imperative that those "in the know" should disperse, and Missie left Berlin in September 1944. The last months of the war she worked as a nurse in and around Vienna.

If this book seems less than analytical, one must remember that war's first casualty was *time*, to write, to think. Bombing continued night after sleepless night, and much of the days' activity was devoted to mere existence.

Missie's diary is most useful because of its vivid portrayal of wartime Berlin. It was "in the face of a Schrecklichkeit unparalleled in history" that the conspirators chose to prove their formidable courage and character.

Howard Sitton is a contracts manager for a small aerospace firm.

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Letter From Dumbland

by Bryce Webster

The Myth of Learning Disability

In advertising, it's called weasel type, those tiny bits of typography which explain the nut of the matter (Offer expires on May 31, 1997. Employees of XYZ Corp. are ineligible). So, here goes the weasel type of this discourse.

I am not a teacher. Nor am I a mother. Not even a research scientist, a sociologist, a social worker, a therapist, a doctor of any sort, a crank, or a do-gooder. I am not, as I am at pains to make clear, a journalist; I am not now nor have I ever been a "liberal." I am not a religious nut, nor a moralist in the current pejorative sense of the word as used by the aforementioned journalists. Neither am I a political maven nor a mental midget (the two terms being, in some cases, interchangeable). I fully realize these statements open me to substantial risk. So be it.

What I am is an author of books and articles about entrepreneurship and business who finds the term "learning disability" one of the most frightful phrases, describing one of the most damaging concepts, of this generation or any.

It all started with my young nephew, when he was 10, some five years ago. He spent a couple of hours on a trip to Connecticut with me, crying because his fifth-grade social studies teacher had him adjudged learning disabled. No fool, the kid assumed this meant he was a dummy. He was hurt, distressed, depressed, and hopeless. And I wanted to kill his educator.

I didn't. I probed for more information. Was my nephew doing poorly in social studies? Yes. But Miss Perry didn't like him. How did he know? She ignored him whenever he raised his hand. He's a pragmatist, like his aunt, and a little short on persistence. But what 10-year-old isn't? So he ceased raising his hand. Why expend the energy uselessly? Doesn't sound stupid to me. Shortsighted, yes. But stupid? No. He's a goal-oriented kid. When there's no chance of reaching one goal, he simply picks a different one.

I encouraged him—pointed out that anyone who could remember 10 full years of batting averages of both leagues could hardly be stupid. And correcting his first-grade teacher about dinosaurs—and having her apologize to him—was not dumb. Nor was writing a novel at age nine (about dungeons and dragons, of course). A young boy who could come through the breakup of a home with his humor intact and be polite and well-spoken to adults . . . well, that person is not stupid.

It helped. But still, he had been labeled, or libeled as I prefer to call it. His grades kept plummeting, not only in social studies but also in subjects he liked better to begin with. By midyear, I had decided to have him professionally evaluated, over, I admit only a bit shamefully, his mother's protests.

The results? No learning disability was apparent in the short evaluation. The therapist recommended the full treatment, so to speak, but his mother ignored that. (It is in her best interest, she thinks, to keep the kid down. But that's another story.) The simple fact that a therapist—a well-respected one at the Institute of Rational-Emotive Therapy—told my nephew he very likely was not learning disabled was a miracle cure. His grades went up almost instantly, and by the middle of spring he had been removed from at least some of the hated "LD" classes. My nephew, now almost 16, is hard at work as a reporter on his school paper. His grades are acceptable. He has friends. He plays baseball well. He still knows more about sports statistics than any 10 adults. And he doesn't feel stupid anymore. He intends to become a sportswriter when he grows up, which I heartily endorse. He's a good writer, has a quick mind, and loves the sports which he realizes he is too slightly built to play professionally.

What was gained by all this? First, of course, his social studies teacher shifted an unwelcome student to another classroom. Second, his school district got another body to count in their federally mandated special education classes. No doubt this helped their grantsmanship. Very likely, also, it kept at least one otherwise "excess" teacher's salary intact.

Is the term "learning disability," then, synonymous with "Public School Teachers' Full-Employment Act"? I think so. And its immorality lies in labeling a whole lot of innocent children with a hurtful tag they will never lose so some adults would have a job to do. Whatever happened to those public-service commercials about a mind being a terrible thing to waste?

In the Arizona suburban school districts of Window Rock and Bisbee, 11.1 percent and 12.16 percent, respectively, of the 1983-84 school budget was used for special education. The suburban districts of Apache and Cochise spent, respectively, 8.1 and 9.8 percent. The urban district of Tempe, however, spent a whopping 17.7 percent of its budget on special ed. And the rural (possibly Indian) district of Valley Union spent 17.5 percent. Conclusion? More city kids and rural kids are learning disabled than suburban kids. Is this true? Or could it be that the rural districts are recipients of government largesse through grantsmanship and income-transfer, while the urban districts are beneficiaries of grantsmanship and teachers' organizing? Or perhaps through the agitation of well-educated and well-heeled parents? It could be.

The body of literature about mental retardation suggests quite clearly that affluent families are more likely to use the public health services than are middle- or working-class families. However, children from affluent fami-

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lies are much less likely than poor children to be labeled mentally retarded, although both may have the same intellectual levels. This interesting perversion of logic, or what might be called The Prince and Pauper Syndrome, seems to translate well from true mental retardation to LD.

Certainly, this is true in New York City. I have some so-called learning disabled friends there: two children of a wealthy family.

The first child is prone to temper tantrums and always has been. But then, he's the baby, the afterthought. And although this family can easily afford to spend $40,000 a year on private school educations, the beneficent city of New York saw fit to pay and is still paying for the first seven years of this child's very special education. Not that it has done any good. He still embarrasses his older sister with baby talk. He still wrecks his big brother's belongings with nary a peep from a parent—except to enjoin the big brother from killing him, a bad idea, I think.

Frankly, I cannot see that the child is anything but wily, lazy, and self-centered. For, when he is around adults who do not tolerate such behavior, he behaves almost like a boy his age might be expected to. He can carry on quite intelligent conversations for a good length of time, about subjects from anteaters to manned flight. His motor skills seem less impaired than at the family breakfast table. He is even able to visit museums without touching the gem cases while, at home, he can scarcely pour a glass of milk without major assistance. He reads things for himself in public. He even suggests routes to cabdrivers to cut the expense of the ride, which he is clearly calculating along with the meter. So in what way is this child learning disabled? His supposed dyslexia disappears on demand, as does his inability to pay attention, his baby talk, his trouble with sums, *ad nauseam*. Indeed, this "poor child" was as well-read last fall about the Iran/Contra "scandal" as many adults and could ask more perceptive questions about it than most. He even expressed his own ideas about the morality of the thing.

So much for the family's poor baby. There's also the problematic sister. She's a charming and beautiful young teenager who likes to write and date, doesn't like math and Latin. This is because, I was recently informed, she is "learning disabled" in math and Latin. Tutors, money. Simple connection, especially at the financially beleaguered private boarding school she attends. I hope she transcends it. Since she's a pragmatist, too, I think she will. But I wonder who's paying for this one.

I know who's paying for the disproportionate number of specially educated learning-disabled students in the great state of Delaware, where the Teachers' Full-Employment Act is in full swing.

In 1969, it might easily be argued, the graffiti was on the wall. The first of the baby boomers were graduating from college, and they were not having many babies. Moreover, a huge supply of these baby boomers burst forth from the teachers' colleges (after all, Mom and Dad had pointed out that Janie would have summers free if she became a teacher) onto the dwindling job market. So is it coincidence that in Delaware, in 1969, enrollment in special education leaped by 30.9 percent, while the increase in total student enrollment inched up only 4.7 percent? By 1973, when the invisible ink was being heated up and brought into clear view (the general enrollment having dropped by 1.8 percent that year), special ed enrollment leaped by 20.3 percent. In 1977, the spread was plus 12.1 special ed, minus 3.5 general enrollment. And so on.

In 1981 and '82, enrollment dropped for both. But it dropped less for special ed. The spread in 1981: minus 1.5 special ed, minus 4.4 general enrollment. For 1982: minus 0.1 special ed, minus 2.6 general. But by 1983, the last year for which I could obtain figures, the balance was back in the plus column for special ed (plus 2.7) while still dropping generally (minus 1.3). It's not hard to believe that in Delaware, one-quarter of all elementary schoolteachers are teaching special ed—which is taught to a mere 11 percent of the students, although this, too, is climbing.

To say that learning disability is something of a joke may sound cruel. But let's face it; when a subject ends up the feature story on a local 11:00 news

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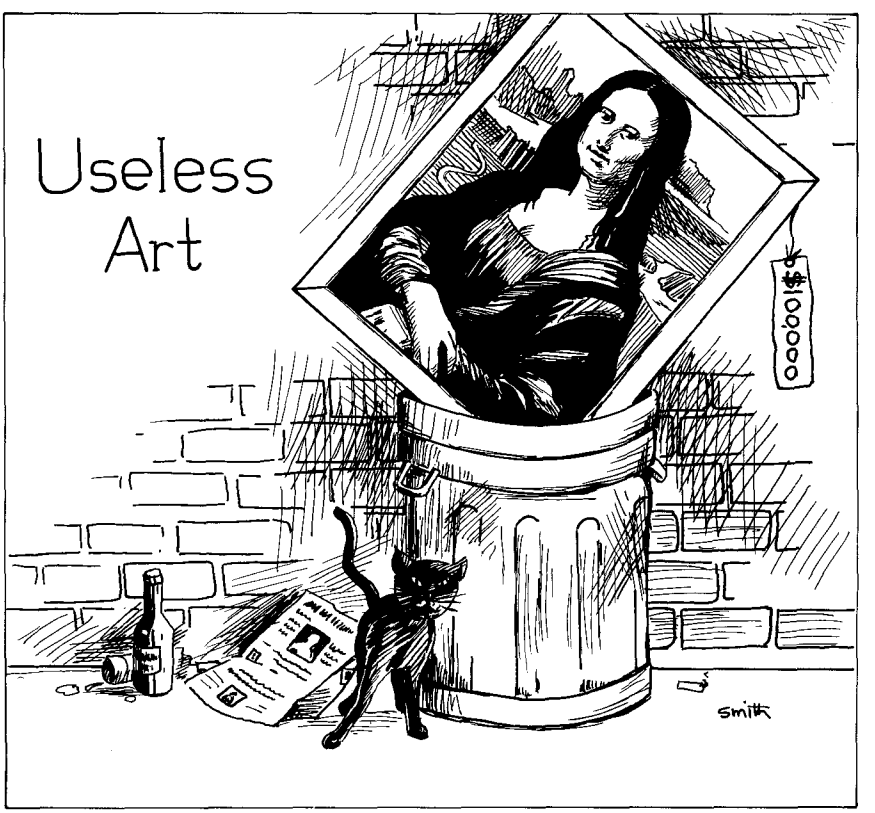

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show on a network affiliate—well, that's a joke. In May, this occurred at a Miami-Fort Lauderdale network affiliate. Ten thousand Broward County students, the reporter said, were learning disabled, poor dears. About the same time, I found that two days a week the public library didn't open until noon. Granted, the kids would be in school then. But it seemed symptomatic of the learning illogic—what about the mommies and daddies, after all?

That same week, I was told that every school in the county had gotten a Moog synthesizer under a federal grant. These go for about $2,000 apiece. There are more than 100 schools in Broward County. And some schools got more than one synthesizer. I know this because our office manager's daughter brought one of them home. "Take it if you want to play around with it," the music teacher said. "No one here knows how to play the thing." The kid's father is a computer whiz. It is costing the government, or us, $2,000 for the child to play with the Moog and present her electronic fiddlings at the annual talent show. (What happened to cute pet tricks? Or acrobatics?)

When something is really ludicrous and bothersome, most healthy people make jokes of it. It's not surprising, then, that whenever there's a proofreading error around the office, we all cackle about the proofer being learning disabled. Someone fails to hear what is being said and asks, "Could you repeat that?" "What, are you hearing disabled?" is the usual rejoinder.

Can't live within your income? Obvious financial disability there. Used to be called profligacy, or even spendthriftiness.

Drop your coffee cup after a late night with a storyboard? Must be motor coordination disabled. Remember clumsy? Most kids outgrow it. And therein also lies a tale. I know a dance teacher who is so clumsy offstage and out of the studio that she literally walks into walls. This is partly because her early training taught her to look up and ahead, which makes it easy to trip over a button if your mind wanders. And, of course, until she had radial keratotomy surgery, she was almost legally blind.

There are untold brilliant scientists who are clumsy, in the everyday sense of the word. Never mind that they can dissect a newt's eyelash in the lab. When they walk around doing their daily chores, they bump into things. Their gait, as long as it gets them where they want to go, is of no concern to them.

And then, there's what I call the Stephen Hawking theory. Hawking is, you may recall, the most brilliant physicist in recent memory. Like Einstein, he had problems in school. But that's only half of it. Hawking's body is wasting away. Today, he can move only one or two tiny muscles voluntarily. It is a disease he's got, a syndrome. But look at what it does, for him and us. Though I daresay he might disagree, it blessedly allows him to be a completely cerebral being—in a way, it helps him with his immense contributions to human knowledge. He doesn't have to waste his valuable time giving inane talks to mindless yobbos at conferences somewhere in Ullulu-land. Of course, he misses out on playing touch football with his kids. But his contributions to science have been such that it matters little to those who come after if he was purple with blue spots and had a learning disability in French, Urdu, and lute-playing. (I have never heard of a lute-playing disability, but give it time. I myself have a Judith Krantz book-reading disability; I would give a lot to a good grantsman to get me some federal funds to overcome it.)

Besides being the foundation of the above-mentioned Full Employment Act, learning disabilities are very likely to be the great homogenizer many of us have feared for so long. All men (and women and children and dogs and cats and budgerigars) are not created equal, at least in the simplistic (read wrong) sense given forth by the schoolmarms (educators) today. Equality is a very unequal thing. My own brother is Mensa-caliber; I am not. On the other hand, the public body of my mental work exceeds his by an unknowable factor, since he has never published anything. He is an auto dealership manager. But we are equal. He's happy and so am I. He escaped from school just before learning disabilities came on the scene, so escaping his share of labels. His attention wandered in math class; he knew more than the teacher was teaching for his grade level. He just plain hated history. Now, he's my main source on historical perspective of modern events; he's a voracious reader in that field.

And he's a riot. The synapses in his brain flash so fast and so well that he can see true humor in jut about anything and give it voice. He has a fan club in three states. And Japan.

So what would have happened to the tyke if learning disability had been around in his early youth? Probably he would have been categorized as LD with verbal impairment or accused of having a short attention span. Or maybe someone would have written something like this: "His fine motor movements for cutting, pasting, writing, hammering, stringing beads, working puzzles and more look immature and clumsy. He displays poor ability to combine movement and vision."

That described my brother at a certain age to a T. The thing was, he was the only left-handed member of the family. Also, before he could toddle he began to speak *Chinese*, which he picked up from the laundryman. Today, Chinese is all forgotten. And he did outgrow the clumsiness, although not before he embarrassed me for years.

One of the relatively harmless primers for parents of LD children gives laundry lists of "can't do" things at the end of each chapter. Here's one: "He often cannot distinguish similar sounds one from the other, such as b and t, and v and th, so of course he cannot attach correct pronunciations to their symbols and his spelling may be dreadful. At times you are bound to feel he is the one who hid behind the door when they were passing out brains because he thought they said trains."

Actually, the joke involves rain (after all, many a young boy would be first in line for trains). Yet, how many of us always hear those similar sounding letters correctly? If we did, there would be no need for the international phonetic alphabet (a as in alpha, b as in beta, c as in cat, and so on, widely used by those who dictate and those who transcribe).

And another: "Some LD children make astonishingly bizarre attempts at phonetic spelling on almost all

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words." So that makes them stupid? Or crazy? Listen, it's English —American English at that—these kids are having to learn. Maybe they think their way is a nifty shortcut. After all, no one ever proposed that the author of Winston Tastes Good Like a Cigarette Should was learning disabled —though he bent grammar to his own meaning and usage. I do, however, remember snide remarks about the destruction of the language wreaked by ad-speak.

The author of the primer does point out that labeling a child LD is tantamount to saying he has a dread disease which can only be treated by the supertrained. And this, she adds, is untrue. Her prescriptions for the prevention of LD look to me like common sense that used to be, as little as 25 years ago, how children were ordinarily raised. For example, the guide recommends, among other things:

Speaking to your infant so that he or she will begin to recognize human speech. (Anyone for raising the kid with wolves?)

Providing your child with paper and crayons in ample supply, as well as puzzles and other amusements of early youth.

Avoiding encouraging "baby talk"; rather, she says, one ought to repeat semi-gibberish in complete sentences, so the child will learn.

Making sure the child has games that foster coordination. (Hint: The New York child's parents did not play ball, or much of anything else, with him. They did hire an "occupational" therapist at $80 an hour at the taxpayers' expense.)

Watching the child's diet; he may be sensitive to sugar (hyperactive kids, it has been known for more than 20 years, usually are) or something else, particularly chemical additives in food. In other words, feed the kid food, not chemicals, and limit sweets. This used to be the most common of common sense.

Developing a program to control behavior. (I assume this might include liberal use of the word No. Modern mommies appear to need their own remedial course in this simple Anglo-Saxon syllable.)

Ignoring tantrums is also recommended. (Think about it. How many modern mommies have you seen buying off Junior with a toy when he was trying out for the Eddie Munster award in the supermarket?)

Belatedly, I don't mean to imply that learning disability doesn't exist. It possibly does, in a few extreme cases. The rest, as far as I can tell—and as far as the few traditional good teachers I know can tell me—is all fluff designed for the parents who like to feel their child is "different." If they can't have a genius, a learning disabled will do. This in itself smacks of the parents being rational discrimination disabled.

At its heart, then, is learning disability anything more than the kids' brains and bodies developing at different rates? Must we make a "disease" out of what is a completely ordinary process? A book editor I worked with once told me she was dyslexic. But she had managed to graduate from Mount Holyoke before anyone ever thought up the term. Her dyslexia, however, got her out of a lot of proofreading. She chose this excuse-path in adulthood—kids don't have that choice. However much we may natter about kids having rights, the one fundamental right they do unarguably have is to their own selfhood. Denigrating that selfhood for adult convenience is unwise at best and immoral at its base.

I argue for simplicity, common sense, and good teaching. I argue for a return to a world in which smart kids could do it all, whereas other kids were magnificent at math and poor at poetry and vice versa, while still others were average, and a few, just a few, needed extra help to reach their potential. That, after all, was what teaching was all about.

Bryce Webster is author of In Search of Modern Ireland: An American Traveler's Odyssey *(Dodd, Mead).*

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Fightin' Words

Perhaps you heard something of the furor evoked down here a couple of years ago when it was reported that a speech pathologist in Chattanooga, one Beverly Inman-Ebel, was conducting a class for those who wished to shed their Southern accents. (That's how the news stories put it. One could as well say, of course, that they wanted to acquire a Northern—or, as it's known in the speech biz, a "standard American"—accent.) On investigation, it turned out that Ms. Inman-Ebel's course was just one of many; such courses were available in several other Southern cities.

Alas, despite ridicule and abuse from regional chauvinists like me, the abomination continues to spread, showing how irresistible is even a bad idea whose time has come. Now my own university has gotten into the act: Our department of "speech communication" offered such a course last fall. When I ventured to inquire whether the taxpayers of North Carolina knew that their money was being spent to deracinate their children, the department's chairman tried gamely to put the best face on it. She offered the pragmatic argument that actors and media personalities and businessfolk need to be able to speak in "standard American." (A friend observes that it's too bad our alumnus Andy Griffith didn't take such a course. No telling what he might have amounted to if he could speak properly.)

People should take these courses, in other words, for the same reason that people teach them: because there's a mess of pottage in it. Or, if "mess" is on the list of condemned Southernisms, we can say: because it will help them make a buck. My colleague the chairman did not venture to say whether it is right that there are occupations where this is so, or whether students should be encouraged to enter them. She just offered it as a fact of life.

And, unfortunately, she's correct. Some non-Southerners—prospective employers, customers, clients, and voters among them—simply find Southern accents unpleasant. Billie Sue Knittel of Atlanta, for example, enrolled in a lose-your-accent course taught by an Ohio migrant named Shelly Friedman, and told a UPI reporter that the Yankee dentist she works for made her do it. "I talked too Southern for him." This jerk didn't want her answering his phone until

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she clipped her vowels and pronounced her terminal "g's."

But at least he gave her a job in the first place. It was revealed a few years ago that some Congresspersons had specified "no Southern accent" as a criterion for hiring folks to work in their offices. You know, some Southerners find non-Southern speech ugly, too: In a 1971 survey, about one white North Carolinian in eight and one black in six agreed that "I don't like to hear a person with a Northern accent." *Chacun a son gout*, and perhaps someone's entitled to have his phone answered in whatever accent he prefers. But recall that these are the same legislators who pass federal anti-discrimination laws.

And there's more to this than aesthetics. Apparently some believe that slow speech indicates slow thought —or so we might conclude from laboratory studies showing that the average non-Southern college sophomore assumes a Southern speaker to be less bright than a non-Southern one, even when the two are saying exactly the same thing. Since college sophomores occasionally grow up to be employers, their prejudices are of more than academic interest, and it may make sense to take them into account.

While it may be canny to cater to somebody else's bigotry, though, it's a risky business. If you come to accept his standards for your own, it can be downright degrading. Maybe the miserable wretches who engage the services of speech pathologists know what they're doing, in a sense. But maybe black folks who invest in skin-lightener or hair-straightener do, too. When it comes to regional accents, I side with Atlanta journalist Lewis Grizzard, who wrote that "if you are going to classes to lose your Southern accent you are turning your back on your heritage and I hope you wind up working behind the counter of a convenience store with three Iranians and a former Shiite holy man."

So what can we do about it? Well, Mike Royko inadvertently suggested an answer, in a column written at just about the same time that Ms. Inman-Ebel's sinister activities were being exposed. Royko wondered idly why it is that Joseph William Namath of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, has a Southern accent and was known for a time as "Joe Willie" Namath. He speculated that since Namath's longtime occupation "involved being chased and fallen upon by gigantic linemen, most of whom seem to be either black or white Southerners," perhaps "Namath thought that if he talked like them, they wouldn't fall on him as hard."

Royko also noted the prevalence of Southern speech patterns in popular music, pointing to the career of Bob Dylan, a Jewish boy from Minnesota who did all right once he learned to sound like an Okie, and to the delightful spectacle of English rock singers bawling, "C'mawnn all you pee-puhhlll, let's git togayder." (Royko's attempt to reproduce a Southern accent as rendered by English rockers may not be entirely satisfactory, but you get the idea.)

Finally, Royko wrote, a co-worker of his affected "Yuppabilly dialect" because he discovered that he could impress more females in singles bars if he spoke with a drawl. It provided him with a more "rakish, macho, good old boy personality than did his Yale background."

Now, frankly, I find Royko's picture of big-city MBA's in Tony Lama boots saying "Mah place or yores?" about as pathetic as that of Billie Sue Knittel trying to enunciate. But the basic point remains. When Southerners are good at something—football, singin', picking up women—they don't have to shed their accents. If anybody's at a disadvantage, it's those who *don't* drawl. Shelly Friedman's course is for the Billie Sues of this world. You don't see Ted Turner signing up for it. And I

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look forward to the episode of *Dallas* in which J.R. Ewing meets Beverly Inman-Ebel.

The best solution for us all would be pluralism. Why should all radio announcers sound as if they come from Iowa? Why should Shakespeare sound less strange in "standard American" than in a Southern accent that's probably closer to the Elizabethan anyway? But if pluralism isn't realistic—if non-Southerners continue to give Southerners a hard time about their accents—Southerners' only alternative may be to take over. Then we could set up courses to teach Yankees how to talk right.

Late News Flash: The Wall Street Journal *reports that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has prohibited "job discrimination because of a person's accent or manner of speaking." The story goes on to say that "an employer must show a nondiscriminatory reason for denying a job because of a person's foreign accent or manner of speech." I can hardly wait for the first test case.*

John Shelton Reed is a diglossal professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Letter From the Heartland

by Jane Greer

Government Jerky

My husband, a beef jerky afficionado, tells me that C & I Jerky, Ltd. makes some of the best he's ever tasted.

Ileene Nodland and Cheryl Knutson produce it themselves in Dunn Center, North Dakota, which had 170 residents during the 1980 census and has fewer now. Knutson started out making her special venison jerky, and then the two neighbors began using one or the other's kitchen: spicing the meat, drying it (originally in an oven, later in a dehydrator), cutting it into strips with scissors, and giving it to family and friends. They perfected their recipe, and people loved it.

Then they got the idea of making a little more and selling it—starting a small business that wouldn't cut into the hours they spend working their ranches with their husbands.

"We thought we'd probably need a license," says Nodland. They called a lawyer, and he told them that since there was no sales tax on such food in the state and they wouldn't need a sales tax license, they wouldn't need any other kind of license, either. They called another lawyer, and he told them to call the State Health Department, and they said to call the U.S. Department of Agriculture—but the man they needed to talk to was on vacation. By that time they had decided to just go ahead and sell some jerky. "We figured that if we needed a license, they'd tell us and we'd get one," says Nodland.

All this happened in the summer of 1984. In September of that year, after Knutson and Nodland had about $1,000 worth of jerky in 39 bars and stores spread over several counties, a USDA inspector called to say that their jerky was illegal because it hadn't been inspected or approved by the USDA. Nodland and Knutson met with him and were told that they could get 10 years and a $10,000 fine for selling jerky outside the law. "They said we could give away all we wanted, but if we sold just one stick to a neighbor, we would be breaking the law—and they made it clear that they would prosecute," says Nodland. The two were told to remove their jerky from the establishments that were selling it and advised that it would take from $50,000 to $100,000 to set themselves up in business correctly—figures that Nodland says are pretty close to the truth.

Here's a short-form version of what C & I had to do, once they decided to take the plunge. First, they had to kiss goodbye all that companionable kitchen manufacturing and build a plant to government specs. Their building, finished in January 1987 after two years and a thousand miles of red tape, is 30 x 40 feet, and by law had to contain 11 steel doors. The building also had to include a meat inspector's office of at least 70 square feet; just to be on the safe side, they gave him an extra two square feet, which means that his office takes up 6 percent of their floor space. They had to put in a men's bathroom for him, even though he's there for only a few hours a month, and their only employee is a third woman. His office had to contain a file and locker, both kept locked against Nodland and Knutson, and a desk.

"We put in the locker," Nodland says, giggling a little, "and then one day the inspector that was over *him* came to inspect and told him that regulations say we also have to put up a coat hook, so he came and told us, and we had to put one up. We've also had the inspector over *that* inspector [i.e., the inspector's inspector's inspector], and I understand that we may soon be paid a visit by *his* inspector [the inspector's inspector's inspector's inspector]."

One day the inspector told C & I that they needed a rodent-proofing plan. Nodland reminded him that their foundation went down eight feet into the ground, four more feet than the law required, and that Dunn Center had no rodent problem. He told her to draw up a plan showing where she would put rodent traps. "He said I had to put an 'x' on the blueprint wherever I would put a rodent trap, and that I could never put a rodent trap where I didn't have an 'x' on the blueprint. So I cover that blueprint with 'x's, trying to be safe. Then he told me that I had too many traps on it," Nodland sighs.

C & I is usually open from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.; the hours after 5:00 p.m. are spent cleaning up. Business is terrific, and Nodland would like to hire a second shift. "But," she says, "the law reads that if we're actually processing the meat outside of eight-to-five weekday hours, we have to pay the inspector ourselves for his time." At $24 an hour, that could really eat into their already small profits. C & I hasn't had to pay the inspector yet because they don't do any actual placing of jerky strips in jars after 1,700 hours or on weekends or federal holidays.

The meat they use has already been approved at the approved slaughterhouse, but "they also make us use approved products for everything connected with the processing, and that includes paper products, like waxed paper," says Nodland. "We have to get a letter from the product manufacturer guaranteeing that the product is USDA-approved for use in food processing. But it's very hard to find com-

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panies that are approved, and the USDA won't give us a working list because they say they don't want to 'endorse' any companies. So we have to use trial-and-error to find manufacturers that are USDA-approved and will go to the trouble of getting us a letter of guarantee from their home office."

Beef jerky is what cowboys on trail drives used to carry in their saddlebags to snack on; by definition, it doesn't need refrigeration. Still, the law said that C & I had to have a walk-in cooler in which to store their jerky in jars before they delivered it to the bars and stores to sit at room temperature. They installed a cooler but didn't put the labels on the jars until they were ready to ship, because the humidity in the cooler made the labels wrinkle. (The saga of designing the label to government satisfaction is a story in itself.) The inspector told them that they had to put the labels on *before* the jars went into cold storage, because the label shows that the jerky has been inspected.

"Except that it hasn't," says Nodland. "He never actually looks at the jerky. When we first opened for business, he sent some of our jerky away to be tested to make sure it was dry enough that it wouldn't spoil, but he hasn't looked at the jerky since then. I know he's only following the rules," she continues, "and I do believe that meat inspection is important. But if the USDA is trying to make sure of the quality of our jerky, wouldn't you think they'd *look* at it once in a while?"

C & I goes through about 600 pounds of ground beef a week, less than is in the average supermarket meat section. Have Knutson and Nodland ever seen the bible of regulations that runs their lives? "Oh, yes, it's about four inches thick," Nodland says. "And when we complain about any of this, our inspectors say, 'This is the law, and if you don't like it, go to DC and get it changed.'"

I called the local office of the meat inspector in question, and he told me to call the USDA in Billings, Montana, and talk to a Dr. Bowman (I'm not sure of the spelling). Dr. Bowman answered all of my questions carefully, politely, and with skillful bureaucratese, explaining why all of this was necessary: basically, because the regulations say so. When we had covered everything, I asked him for his full name and title so that I could quote him. "Oh, you don't need to do that," he drawled. "I usually spell my name U-S-D-A o-f-f-i-c-i-a-l."

Jane Greer edits Plains Poetry Journal, *just on principle.*

Letter From Albion

by Andrei Navrozov

Spetsnaz

This month I am reporting from London on the recent publication here of what is undoubtedly one of the most important books ever written on the subject of totalitarian expansionism. I offer this judgment because, although the accident of birth and intellectual curiosity have made Soviet Russia a subject of special interest for me, I have never read anything as powerful as *Spetsnaz*; certainly not since 1973 (when I first read my father's book in typescript) and perhaps not since 1968 (when, at age 12, in Moscow, I first leafed through Robert Conquest's *Great Terror*).

Were the reading public more interested in the immediate prospects for the survival of our civilization than in the opinions of the Nobel committee, the name of Viktor Suvorov—on the strength of this book alone—would doubtless eclipse that of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, while the exotic term this pseudonymous defector-turned-author uses as his title—*spetsnaz*—would become commonplace in our speech. Yet the term "gulag" worked its way out of italicized obscurity thanks to the international publicity carelessly ignited by Khrushchev around Solzhenitsyn; needless to say, the author of *Spetsnaz* (or Western civilization, depending on which way you look at it) can count on no such boon. As a matter of fact, one has the distinct impression that this book (published by a subsidiary of Penguin) has had an inadequate translator, only a perfunctory editor, no copy editor, and hardly a proofreader, which can only mean that the publisher's estimate of its chances of commercial success coincides with mine.

What makes *Spetsnaz* so unusual and compelling is that it is not "history" (that is, "truth about the past," a commodity dispensed, at times, even by the Soviet regime for tactical purposes of its own). It is the story of the present, of the current threat to Western survival, told by an insider who happens to possess extraordinary common sense, great powers of observation and induction, as well as a fine understanding of history.

The Russian abbreviation *spetsnaz* stands for "special purposes" and designates elite strata of specially trained fighters integrated into each of the 41 armies the Soviets are ready to field. At the XII World Parachuting Championship, held in France in 1984, the Soviet "team"—*spetsnaz*—won 22 out of 26 gold medals. "France is the only country in Europe," Suvorov observes, "that stores strategic nuclear missiles in underground silos. The silos are an extremely important target, possibly the most important in Europe. The force that will put them out of action will be a *spetsnaz* force." With bitter irony and in a wooden translator's English, Suvorov adds:

> It is often claimed that sport improves relations between countries. This is a strange argument. If it is the case, why did it not occur to anyone before the Second World War to invite German SS parachutists to their country to improve relations with the Nazis?

Systematically, and basing his conclusions on personal experience of *spetsnaz* service, Suvorov sketches out the recent history of the contingent slated to fight in the vanguard of Soviet world conquest. He discusses its composition (currently, ethnic Russians and "the Other People," namely, Soviet citizens born to displaced German, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Korean, or other foreign parents); its methods of selection and training (frequently intertwined with the national sports program, Soviet Olympic champions in such events as the biathlon all being in *spetsnaz*); the agent network on which it relies abroad, the weapons and equipment it uses, and the kinds of missions in which it is involved (nearly always the objective is to neutralize resistance by striking at

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nuclear installations, centers of communications, and the like). It would be unfair to the author to try and summarize his book in this space. (I urge interested readers to order their copies by writing to Waterstone's, 99-101 Old Brompton Road, London SW7, because this bookseller is equipped to handle requests from abroad.) But I do want to draw some urgent conclusions.

Just as the totalitarian rulers' relationship to the countries they rule resembles "private" ownership, so—paradoxically—the totalitarian war machine, at least at its *spetsnaz* best, displays the characteristics of a "private" army, in the sense we in the West use that term to describe a level of excellence generated by the laws of supply and demand for the quality-conscious consumers in a free economy. Conversely, the West's military defense structure—excluding its existing industrial base and nearly unlimited technological potential, essential products of civil, free-market activities—seems to belong to the pre-World War I era (the "morality" of conscription, for instance, was the subject of political debate in the U.S. during the 1980 presidential election just as it had been when Saki's comic character was "bayoneted to death by conscientious objectors" 70 years earlier).

Spanning many military fields, such as intelligence, where the links with private industry and commerce are fewer and the consumer (ultimately, the electorate) is underrepresented or not quality-conscious, this gap—the *spetsnaz* gap—is the true "window of vulnerability" through which the Soviets will step into Western Europe. The removal of any part of NATO's nuclear deterrent from Europe—contemplated as I write these lines—for political reasons by the elected representatives of misinformed electorates, opens a side door as well. For the Soviets, whose totalitarian machine of aggression is designed for the end of the 20th century and advanced enough to take them into the 21st, have given new meaning to Clausewitz's old *mot* by standing it on its head: Politics, in 1987, is war continued by other means.

Andrei Navrozov is poetry editor of Chronicles.

REVISIONS

Education, Inc.

"By and large we like school people. As a group, they are honest and more likely to be concerned about the welfare of others than the average person in many lines of work." That, at least, is the conclusion of Tom and Harriet Sobol in *Your Child in School: Kindergarten Through Second Grade* (New York: Arbor House; $17.95). And if Tom, a school superintendent, and Harriet, the author of 10 books for children, are to be believed, all the elementary schools need is a little nudge, now and then, in the right direction.

"Most school problems can be resolved cooperatively if parents and school people show a little skill and patience and a willingness to try." There's the rub. When did a powerful monopoly ever relinquish its grip in the face of polite suggestions? It is more than a political question, since the involvement of parents and community appears to be a vital element in the operation of effective schools. James S. Coleman, Thomas Hoffer, and Sally Kilgore in *Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities* (New York: Basic Books; $21.95) have discovered—to no one's surprise—that students of all types do better in Catholic schools, precisely because of the shared values and community ties within the Catholic community. Public schools with low dropout rates and records of academic success are set in communities marked by a set of accepted social norms and intact families.

This study, a sequel to the authors' *High School Achievement*, lends credibility to one of Secretary Bennett's favorite sermon topics: the need for parental and community participation in school decision-making. The book, however, is so filled with pretentious jargon and so muddled in its syntax that it raises the question of what the authors mean by education.

Inevitably, Coleman and company remain suspicious of private schools and of the rugged individualism they represent: "The family acts individually, enrolling the child in a school that is not an outgrowth of a functional community. . . . But this individual calculus on the part of the parent, attempting to maximize the fit of school to child, overlooks a set of social resources which are not provided by schools themselves, but are provided by these social relations that exist among the parents of students in the school." Therefore, the authors seem to conclude, government should provide no incentives to parents who wish to liberate their children from the kindly ministrations of the education monopoly. Hardly a surprising conclusion from a team of sociologists.

It is with relief that we note the return to print of Stephen Arons' *Compelling Belief: The Culture of American Schooling* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press; $8.95 paper). In an era of fragmenting consensus, who has the right to determine which values, which metaphysical system schools will employ in their process of indoctrination? Conservatives have discussed these questions for years—with too much rhetoric and too little information. But Arons, as a legal scholar, brings a good mind and a solid grasp of the facts to bear upon the problem of pluralism and education. He has written a compelling legal indictment of the public school monopoly, and if one disagrees with his prescriptions—the social libertinism of vouchers—it is impossible not to admire the clarity and force of his arguments. (TF)

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On 'At-Large Representation'

I have been an avid reader of *Chronicles* since its inception; nonetheless, on occasions, I have disagreed with some of the editorials, especially those which unjustifiably take an anti-immigration stance and those that may appear to take shots at one ethnic group or another in this great country of ours. But many of us have found those opinions to deviate from today's mainstream conservative thought in the USA.

Heritage Foundation's economist Julian Simon, Hoover Institution scholars Lewis Gann and Peter Duignan, and Representatives Jack Kemp (R-NY) and Jim Courter (R-NJ), for example, would raise their eyebrows at some of the apparently emotionally inspired melancholies displayed by the magazine at times.

It is with great pleasure that *Chronicles* comes back home in the April 1987 issue in the "At-large representation" thought-piece. The fact is that, as pointed out, self-labeled "liberals" and "progressives" go bananas in trying to reduce the influence of ethnic voting blocks. They continue to be alarmed by the flood of immigrants who have taken less than a generation to learn how to muscle their way into politics, a fact that those pseudo-liberals seem to consider "un-American."

Old habits, as you say, die hard, and no entrenched "elite" enjoys sharing power with its subjects, a fact that in other historical contents has been dubbed "enlightened despotism." Those of us who watch local politics closely in our pluralistic communities agree with your wise characterizations. The self-appointed guardians-of-the-gate continue to pretend to "save democracy from itself."

Ironically, one may conclude that the USA, one of the most free societies in mankind's history, might be found to be least democratic—in the true sense of the term—as we look at most of the local level units of government, where vested interest machineries succeed in robbing the people of the rights originally guaranteed in our Constitution. Their motto seems to be "one nation . . . with liberty and justice for . . . *almost* all, but not quite all (God forbid!)."

—Roland Alum Jr.
Trenton, NJ

On 'Ask Dr. Grants'

Richard Kostelanetz (*Chronicles*, April 1987) alleges that National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Francis S.M. Hodsoll "exercises, far more frequently than his predecessors, his power to veto grants previously approved by NEA departmental panels." I know of no study that has compared the ratio of this chairman's as against any prior chairman's decisions not to fund proposals recommended by panel and council. My impression is that that judgment is false, both relatively and absolutely. Chairman Hodsoll rarely rejects panel and council advice to fund—or not to fund— proposals.

Mr. Kostelanetz cites anecdotal evidence, specifically, "the examples known to me had in common the facts that they were liberal do-gooding operations . . . and that both had been previously funded. . . . They might not have deserved funding, but political censorship is as unpleasant on the right as on the left." That is a rather considerable conclusion to draw on the basis of no information whatsoever.

That is to say, Mr. Kostelanetz jumps from two cases known to him to the conclusions that Chairman Hodsoll (1) "exercises, far more frequently than his predecessors, his power to veto grants previously approved by NEA departmental panels"; and (2) pursues "a general policy of exercising political censorship." Two cases do not a "*far more frequently*" make, all the more so a "*general policy.*" To conclude, further, that the NEA chairman is now a "cultural czar on the Soviet model," to be made to wonder "why a putative Reaganite should be behaving like an antidemocratic Communist," and so on—these seem to me hardly warranted by the facts—if any.

Now in my third year on the Arts Council of NEA, I can state as fact that in my personal knowledge, Chairman Hodsoll very rarely has exercised the power (given him by Congress) not to fund a proposal recommended by panel and council. When on rare and memorable occasions he has done so, he reports to the council on that fact. It is explained and discussed. I can remember many council meetings at which no such reports came in, and very few when he announced that he had reversed a funding recommendation.

Mr. Kostelanetz has treated in an unjust and unfair way a man of remarkable capacity to sort out in a scrupulously fair and just way a wide variety of political issues in federal support of the arts. Indeed, within the past month I heard, from White House friends, precisely the opposite criticism of both Endowments' chairmen, Mr. Hodsoll and Dr. Cheney, that they *should* reject panel and council recommendations once in a while, which, this friend told me, they really do not do when it is called for. So much for Mr. Kostelanetz's portrait of a Reaganite culture-czar.

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Anyhow, if Mr. Hodsoll were the czar (commissar?) that Mr. Kostelanetz says he is, Mr. Kostelanetz should be afraid to say so, especially since, if my memory serves, Mr. Kostelanetz himself has enjoyed Arts Endowment support—with the chairman's full assent.

—Jacob Neusner
Providence, RI

On 'Cultural Conservation'

Thomas Fleming is right when he observes that "there is no sign of an Eliot on the horizon" (*Chronicles*, July 1987). Why, one wonders, has Western culture not produced a major voice—an Eliot, a Pound, a Thomas Mann—since 1945? Is it, perhaps, because we have come to take democracy too literally? It is one thing, after all, to accede, *à la* Tocqueville, to universal suffrage. But it is quite another to suppose that all voters are competent to make political judgments. Yet many people appear to believe just that. Worse, they extrapolate from the egalitarian political principle; before long they oppose all orders of rank, all forms of "elitism." Over time, this assault on the principle of hierarchy has taken its toll. It has destroyed our willingness and even our capacity to make distinctions of any sort. That is why so many of our fellow citizens assert without fear of contradiction that all "life-styles" and all forms of cultural expression are of equal worth, matters of individual taste not subject to higher appeal.

Read, if you are able, the personals in *The New York Review of Books*. They are almost always written by people seeking people who profess equal enthusiasm for Mozart and Woody Allen, vintage wine and nachos. Or listen as university professors explain why it is impossible to compile a list of great books. Who, they ask with a patronizing smile, is to judge? Despite such false modesty—false because they speak with authority against authority—they and other members of our cultural establishment lavish praise on movies, television shows, rock music, and other bearers of the "popular culture." At the same time, they affirm the value of art that celebrates that which is common, undistinguished, democratic. Dr. Fleming reports that even the draft statement on "Cultural Conservatism" declares "explicitly that the most important component of culture is not high culture but the values of ordinary people." Willy-nilly then, its authors are contributing to the leveling. Far from recognizing any responsibility to extend a tradition that is nothing if not discriminating, they conspire to destroy it.

In *Democracy and Poetry*, his brilliant Jefferson lecture, Robert Penn Warren sounded the alarm. He urged us not to forget that "the making of distinctions in the nature of experience, in the nature of life as lived, is at the center of any art." Poetry, he continued, provides "the Archimedean point from which we can make distinctions, from which we can consider the world of technology and, indeed, of democracy." No one, he knew, who insists that all discriminations are arbitrary, is likely to give us great art, art that enlarges and modifies the tradition in which it is deeply rooted. Precisely this, the defense and development of our tradition, constitutes the essence of "cultural conservatism."

—Lee Congdon
Harrisonburg, VA

We at the Institute for Cultural Conservatism very much appreciate your thoughtful article "Cultural Conservation" in the July issue of *Chronicles*, although as a practicing monarchist I was somewhat amused to be described as a neoliberal Democrat. Perhaps most satisfying to us was your comment that "We might die happy if either party incorporated these prescriptions into its platform." The draft agenda is a political rather than an academic or "high philosophical" document, although we have certainly striven to make it sound philosophically. Our goal is to forge a basis on which a broad, majority coalition can be built, a coalition dedicated to the restoration of traditional Western culture. Under current conditions that is, necessarily, a political task.

We agree with you that the draft agenda is deficient in its treatment of the high arts. We wrestled at great length with the treatment of that subject and ultimately brought forth, as you note, a mouse: a short discussion of aesthetics that focuses on architecture. As elsewhere in the draft, we need and welcome outside assistance. We would be most grateful for any help you could give us in improving the document in this critical respect.

In your comments, there is, I think, one possible misunderstanding. We welcome justification of Western culture in terms of religion and natural law. But, since our goal is building the widest possible coalition to support that culture politically, we also welcome those who support it on other grounds. In order to build a coalition, we want the broadest possible definition of a cultural conservative. That seems to be one who supports traditional Western culture—for whatever personal reasons.

Finally, I must note that two of the individuals you mention are the principal reasons I count myself a cultural conservative: Russell Kirk and Samuel Johnson. The former has been so kind as to tell us he supports our efforts; I like to think, *à la* Beerbohm's *In the Shades*, the latter does as well.

—William S. Lind, Director
Institute for Cultural Conservatism

I prefer *Chronicles* to the other conservative periodicals I see from time to time because I have come to expect from your publication a degree of intellectual rigor that is, unfortunately, all too rarely found on the American right. More than most of your ideological comrades-in-arms, you shun the easy clichés of mean-spirited reaction and maudlin state-chauvinism.

Therefore, I can well understand the *cri de coeur* raised by Thomas Fleming in his disquisition on "Cultural Conservation" in the July issue. He is, after all, by no means the first conservative to lament "O tempora! O mores!"

I expected to find a jeremiad against Fleming's fellow conservatives—particularly in the Reagan administration and the upper echelons of American capitalism—who have rendered such gross disservice to the quality of culture and civil discourse in our country. Indeed, I did find that subtle

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theme of betrayal in Fleming's essay. But it was overshadowed by a perplexing assault on what he repeatedly referred to as "the enemy." As one who is presumably a member of the enemy camp, I must say—I am trying to be polite—that I found little correspondence between Fleming's rhetoric and the reality I see around me.

"For all the great success of the [Reagan] administration," Fleming writes, "the important fact remains that the enemy is still in undisputed possession of the major institutions that control the formation of attitudes and the building of character: churches, schools, 'the arts,' the press are all enemy territory."

Is that really a fact? Fleming identifies "the enemy" as "the radicalized mainstream of American culture" and links it to "the revolutionaries who have been reconstructing society since the 1790's." One must go to the fiction of Thomas Pynchon to find a more durable or vile conspiracy.

Something here just doesn't add up. Why would revolutionaries want to turn our schools into custodial institutions for tractable subjects of the state, endowed with only the minimal skills required by members of a robotized work force? How does that serve the cause of revolution? And why would radicals maintain a press that dutifully parrots the official line on all matters great and small? How is the revolutionary enterprise advanced by those bastions of authority, the churches, or by arts that have been stripped of all meaning or humanity?

It will probably astonish Thomas Fleming that some of us on the left listen to (or play) Bach partitas and read (or recite) Eliot. We're not the ones who have cluttered the campuses with corporate recruiters, the landscape with fast-food joints, and the airwaves with MTV. Much as Fleming would like to disown those barbarous aspects of our culture—and I can sympathize with his plight—they have been wished on us by his conservative constituents in the name of that great conservative institution, American free enterprise. No revolutionaries there.

"Cultural conservatism," Fleming writes, "will remain what it is at this point: a highly advertised parade that consists of a piccolo player and a few floats. We are still waiting for the elephants." Not to worry: The elephants are there, all right. I can hardly cross the street without stepping into tangible proof of their presence.

—Erwin Knoll, Editor
The Progressive

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The Editor Replies

With Prof. Congdon's argument, I have no quarrel, although I would say that there is a democratic-populist strain in American life, which—from the very beginning—has militated against anything like an Old World sense of hierarchy. To the extent we are a people with traditions worth preserving, we must beware of any foreign ideology—whether of the right or left—which would reduce ordinary citizens to the ranks of serfs or welfare state subjects.

To the cultural conservatives, I say "peace be on their house," whether it is a royal palace—as Mr. Lind suggests—or a government building erected by disgruntled social democrats. Samuel Johnson and Walter Scott both wrote political tracts, although even in their propaganda they were not known to fudge on their principles or make common cause with libertines and skeptics.

I suspect that Erwin Knoll and I may have lists of "enemies" that are not entirely dissimilar. The revolutionaries who have worked the mischief I described are not, generally, the political radicals of the past few years but the ideologues and bureaucrats who have institutionalized a kind of liberalism as the ruling orthodoxy. I have no hesitation in deploring the fast-food industry which has not only corrupted a nation's eating habits but has worked to subvert the American family. It is no accident that NOW receives money from an industry that benefits whenever economic necessity drives a mother into the work force.

On the question of Bach and Eliot, a European rightist wrote to the same effect as Mr. Knoll. Having a taste for music and verse—which is surely more widespread on the left—is not, however, the same thing as a full-blooded appreciation of the civilization we have inherited. Laying aside the question of capitalism or even free enterprise, the troubling thing about so many sincere radicals is their sense of guilt and resentment toward the common past. America—whose history is admittedly flawed—is reduced by radical rhetoric into a record of racism, intolerance, and exploitation, and any mention of Greece or Rome is sure to provoke a disquisition on the evils of slavery. Radical scholars will embrace any ideology—feminism, Marxism, etc.—so long as it serves to indict the past (and present). They don't like the U.S. in the here and now, repudiate the conservative nostalgia for an agrarian past, and—since roughly 1940—they have also rejected the Soviet alternative, that is, those who possess a drop of political integrity.

Finally, an honest man must confess that *The Progressive's* editor has struck one sore point. Under capitalism, as Marx and Engels wrote, "all that is solid melts into air." It has always been and continues to be the great challenge for conservative thought—how to tame the wild beast of capitalism without imposing economic and social tyranny. It was the question asked, in one way or another, by Eliot, by the agrarians, and by the most acute conservative political minds of the last generation—James Burnham, Frank Meyer, and Joseph Schumpeter. If Meyer's attempt to combine free enterprise individualism with traditional conservatism no longer serves, we shall have to find others, at least those of us who are not bent on creating a perfect world at the expense of a habitable one.

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POP CULTURE

Notes During the Draining of Lake Wobegon

by Gary S. Vasilash

I am not a sports fan. In spite of the encouragement and coercion of family and friends, I have never taken to hitting, throwing, or running. Yet, my admission of athletic indifference is not a boast. It's only that it makes me acutely aware that Detroit, my home, is what's known as "a great sports town." It's not that its teams are all that hot. They tend not to be (though this year is an exception). But the fans support the teams, come hell or high water, and it usually is one of the two.

One day last September, I spent a lunch hour wandering through a bookstore in Birmingham, one of the city's upscale suburbs. As I passed an elevated desk, I realized the man standing behind it was Ernie Harwell, the voice of the Detroit Tigers. Harwell has been broadcasting Tiger games on WJR radio for as long as I can remember. His voice is to Detroit sports announcers what Chuck Yeager's is to airline pilots: something to be emulated. Harwell was, not unexpectedly, promoting a book.

But no one was lined up for an autograph.

I made eye contact and cudgeled my brains for sports trivia that would serve as some sort of bridge. Civility seemed to demand it. Nothing.

Some two weeks later I planned to spend another lunch hour at the same store. But it was, to all intents and purposes, inaccessible. A line of mostly women snaked out of the store and along the front of the mall. There were well over 100 of them, clutching thick, hardcover books—the sense of excitement, enthusiasm, expectation, and camaraderie was like that of Springsteen fans. But these people could clearly be the parents of rock fans.

The person who had brought them all together, drawing numbers Ernie Harwell could only dream about, was Garrison Keillor, host of the now-ended "A Prairie Home Companion." Keillor had been doing the radio/stage show for 13 years. But earlier this year he decided to return to being "a shy person." Keillor's saga of small-town Midwestern life, appropriate music, and light humor made him a best-selling author and put him on the cover of *Time*. (Although Keillor talked about taking over CBS News, I have my doubts about the upper central Minnesotans who read New York news magazines.) Success seems not to have spoiled Keillor. He retired at the top of his game, though we're sure to be hearing more from him and about Lake Wobegon.

Although my enthusiasm for "A Prairie Home Companion" does not enable me to recite entire passages of the News from Lake Wobegon, like some people I know, whatever it is about Keillor that caused him to far outdraw a Detroit sports celebrity brought me to downtown St. Paul, for one of his final performances.

The magic of Keillor is actually quite simple—and all the more amazing because it is so elegantly pure. In a world of grotesquely perverse abnormalities presented as givens, Keillor is able to portray normalcy with all of its blemishes and bouquets. It's idealized but not innocent, decent but not dull. It plays in Peoria, though it may be incomprehensible in Park Avenue penthouses. Keillor's is a world that never was, yet still exists, every day, in many communities throughout the country. It is something people can identify with and draw close without feeling queasy afterwards—a simple, but no small, feat.

Here are some notes about the May 16, 1987, presentation of "A Prairie Home Companion" in The World Theatre. Guests included the Everly Brothers (Phil and Don) and Taj Mahal.

Audience is dressed mainly in polyester, banlon, and mystery synthetics. A complement of organics, mostly T-shirts and jeans, makes up the rest.

A sign in the lobby warns the show is being taped for broadcast (the Disney Channel) and that the audience has given tacit permission for being cabled into homes. What's the reason? To warn off any Gary Harts who would take their newest inamorata to hear about Powder Milk Biscuits?

Offerings in the gift shop, in addition to sweatshirts for Raw Bits and baseball caps for the Whippets, include a book entitled *Scandinavian Humor*.

The World Theatre was completely renovated a couple years back. The walls are a milky beige with blue trim. The filigree work is appliquéd with gold. It is a million miles from Las Vegas. Yet its upper Midwestern elegance puts it some distance from Lake Wobegon. So, as a reminder of more fundamental things, the dirty brick wall at the rear of the stage.

How many nights did Keillor, *et al.*, play when the brick wall was the theater's most handsome feature, the seats oozed their stuffing, and only a few people were there, getting out of the cold?

A woman with an infant (nine months?) is told they will be asked to leave the auditorium if the child cries.

Keillor's microphone cover is red.

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So are his suspenders, socks, and glass frames. There is no resemblance to, say, an Elton John.

Keillor's preshow warm-up includes comments that, per Economics 101, the value of the tickets is far greater than the price since they are in short supply. All remaining shows are sold out. Of course, the use value is higher than either. Keillor is not above adding light to his sweetness. He knows the audience will understand his reference to the college course: They, or their children, have endured it themselves.

The Everly Brothers: Smoky harmonies speak of bourbon on the veranda, not wine coolers on the beach *à la* Jan and Dean, nor port in a bag in a subway, as consumed by Simon and Garfunkel.

Keillor taps a foot to keep time. Normally it's his right, but he's ambidextrous. Curiously, his feet are tuned to some internal rhythm that has nothing to do with the beat of the song.

Taj Mahal looks like Famous Amos of chocolate-chip cookie fame. He sings "Paradise" and "Everybody Is Somebody." What happened to the "Walking Blues"?

Where else would Phil and Don sing backup for Taj?

Analog watches are worn in Lake Wobegon. There's no on-the-hour—and off-the-hour—beeping.

Interest dwindles as a quartet from Milwaukee plays a medley of Norwegian favorites. It isn't their fault. Things pick up as a couple dressed in, presumably, authentic ethnic costumes come out and do a brisk polka. It must be a big hit for American Public Radio lovers. The entire session is mercifully brief. Yet the night wouldn't be complete without a banjo, accordian, and a few "yips"!

During the news, Keillor describes a small town in the Midwest on a summer's night. "It's not hard to fall in love on such a night," he says.

How can those in NYC and LA understand the soothing smell of lilies and the reassuring sound of water sprinklers?

"This is a life that will hold us up. This is permanent. This is what we live for."

There's more reverence in the audience than is possible at a symphony or rock concert. Those who cough make every effort to stop. Silent asphyxiation would be preferable.

"Softly and tenderly, Jesus is calling all you sinners, come home," says one of the final songs. There is more honest religious feeling in the theater than is possible on any televised ministry, and probably a good deal more than in many churches. Every performer on the stage could be bad to the bone, yet, there is salvation in the music.

The counterpoint to Keillor's opening, "Hello, Love," is exquisite: the Everly Brothers doing "Bye, Bye, Love."

Gary Vasilash grew up listening to The Beatles, Motown, and the Everly Brothers.

ART

A Poetics of the Mundane

by David Kaufman

***Alex Katz* by Ann Beattie, New York: Harry N. Abrams; $27.50.**

A year or two before Ann Beattie's breakthrough second novel, *Falling in Place*, a cartoon appeared in *The New Yorker* showing a crowd of people, dressed in evening gowns and suits, drinks in hand, milling around what looked like an outdoor cocktail party with nearly all of humanity in attendance. The caption read simply: "Woodstock: Tenth Reunion."

During the 70's, while everyone was wondering what had become of the 60's generation, they were always to be found in Ann Beattie's fiction. At the time, there was a popular opinion that the hippies and the revolutionaries merely went underground, biding their time while waiting to reemerge with their ideals intact. But Beattie knew better. In her *New Yorker* stories and in her first novel, *Chilly Scenes of Winter*, Beattie depicted the children of the 60's who had come of age only to realize how naive and adolescent they were. If they had lost something in the process of getting older, their relinquished ideals were replaced by an all-consuming vacancy, an ennui. For the most part, Beattie located them in the Northeast—in rural towns in Vermont or in the second-hand suburbs of used cities in Connecticut, outside New Haven or on the outskirts of Bridgeport.

By the time *Falling in Place* was published in 1980, Beattie had picked up the narrative device that struck many of her readers as vital—her omniscent voice, free of the judgmental baggage that usually reveals an author to her readers. The world of letters received Ann Beattie as the era's answer to Updike and to Cheever.

Falling in Place captured a breed of Americans who seemed to be everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. If her characters seemed to have an existence beyond her conception of them, it's because they did. They were overly familiar at least to everyone who, like Beattie, grew up in the 50's and the 60's. Indeed, for many members of Beattie's audience, they were a little too close for comfort.

Because of her repeated references in *Falling in Place* to rock singers, Beattie became the disc jockey of American letters. But more than this, she seemed to be a kind of TV monitor that one could turn on if one wanted to tune into the contemporary sensibility. Whether or not it was an aim of

BOOKS IN BRIEF—BACK IN PRINT

A Buried Land by Madison Jones, Sag Hill, NY: Second Chance Press; $18.95. Madison Jones's allegory on progress first appeared to great acclaim in 1963. Set in the valley of the Tennessee River, the novel records the moral impact of the TVA on a young lawyer entranced by the vision of the New South. At some points the writer's purpose may be a little too visible, but the conclusion is as powerful as anything in Faulkner.

The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot, Seventh Revised Edition, Chicago: Regnery Books; $19.95. There is little that has not been said in praise of the book that made Russell Kirk the leading conservative intellectual figure in the U.S. This latest edition includes a new forward by Kirk.

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her mission, Beattie herself was as amoral and indifferent as the dial.

By the time her next novel, *Love Always*, was published in 1985, Beattie was accorded all of the usual distinctions: "The essential literary voice of the generation that came of age in the 1960's," wrote Christopher Lehman-Haupt in the *Times*; "A literary high priestess of the Baby Boomers' generation," offered Josh Rubins in *The New York Review of Books*. But something was wrong. *Love Always* was also received as a fall from grace. Just as the society that she had been writing about had been moving into less neutral or more extreme positions, Beattie herself had become more of a presence. Worse yet, the empathy that had figured in her earlier work had been transformed here—not into sympathy but rather into an aloof disdain for her characters.

In view of her own work, the idea to invite Beattie to respond to the representational paintings of the celebrated Alex Katz was irresistible. Many of the figures in Katz's paintings might have easily walked off the pages of Beattie's fictions. His paintings give "still-life" a new meaning—one that suggests the spirit or élan of life has become stagnant and uneventful for his subjects. When art critic Robert Rosenbloom describes Katz, he might just as well be talking about Beattie: "What begins as a way of seeing that can be literal enough to record . . . is uncannily transformed into a still imperturbable world that is simultaneously rooted in, but remote from, our prosaic environment."

At its worst, Beattie's discussion of Katz reads like an extended press release, filled more with glowing redundancies than with critical insights. At its best, it divulges Beattie's unguarded attitude to her own earlier work and accounts for the creative impulse beneath her fictions. By the second or third page of her 70-page treatise, it becomes eminently clear that her commentary on Katz serves only too well as an explanation of her own stories and novels. By the 10th page, we sense that she's describing her own work even more than Katz, evidently without her realizing that she's fallen into such a trap.

"Katz says," she tells us, "that he is not interested in the psychology of his

Alex Katz's *Summer Triptych*. Photo courtesy Marlborough Gallery.

subjects when he paints them, or interested in what they think after the fact." A few paragraphs later she explains that his paintings are "simplifications that point out complexities." Later still, that he "creates . . . human representations that are stand-ins for attitude" and that "people miss the point when they talk about Katz painting surfaces; actually, he distrusts surfaces so much that he will not allow them to provide easy definitions of his subjects." This last remark, defensively delivered, could be a direct reaction to those critics who have accused Beattie of being superficial in her own work.

Approaching something of a summary, Beattie argues that "Katz is undeniably more interested in coherence than in chaos, but what he chronicles may be a strain or alienation that his subjects pay a price for, and what the painter does, himself, is not easy. What is communicated from the various images of sunny days and close embraces can still be fairly interpreted as complex, contradictory, and sad or frightening. Katz presents the images coolly ["cool" is perhaps the most frequently employed word to describe Beattie's fiction], and his interest is in formality: in people who are not harried or passionate or in a state of chaos. But one need not enact extremes to be so dramatic that one is convincing. . . . Working out of a naturalistic tradition . . . Katz has decided to pose us with the problem of a vision in which he is interested in what is simple, but to present that simplicity in an exaggerated way."

Beattie likes to talk around her subject, usually along the lines of describing what these paintings mean to her, but not necessarily what they—or Katz for that matter—might signify to another viewer. Much of her analysis here focuses on where these figures are "at," where they are coming from, or going to. Perhaps she never quite overcame a feeling that she was out of her element, or stretching her authority, by writing about a painter. Perhaps it's even more ingrained than that: Beattie's special narratorless voice does not serve the purposes of a nonfiction exploration.

By spending long sessions with Katz himself, interviewing a number of his subjects, and quoting other painters, Beattie made gestures in the right direction. But her emphasis on the subject and context of the paintings is always at the expense of technique.

For this reason alone, her book fails to bridge the gap between the visual and narrative spheres. If anything, Ann Beattie's study of Alex Katz unwittingly perpetrates the late-20th-century myth that one artistic medium must remain enigmatic to, and impenetrable by, another.

Still, *Alex Katz* is a handsome specimen of a book. At the very least, it is bound to survive as a mid-80's curiosity. But in using the paintings of Alex Katz to explain, inadvertently, her own fictions, Beattie's most interesting message remains covert. What she doesn't say, but what her own work has made clear, and what her investigations have now imparted to Katz's work, is that a specter of ennui has become an inescapable subtext, if not a context, for the contemporary sensibility.

David Kaufman writes from New York.

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